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SHORT SERMONS

FOR ALL THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR.

BY

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TRANSLATED, MODERNIZED, CONDENSED, ARRANGED, AND ADAPTED

BY

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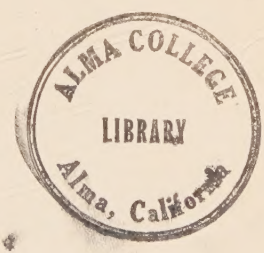
VOL. IV.

THE CHRISTIAN STATE OF LIFE.



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First Sunday of Advent.

Duties of the Young to God.

"*Now is the hour for us to rise from sleep.*"—Rom. 13 : 11.

Yes, now is the hour for you to awake, and arise from sleep. Youth is inclined to be heavy-headed; youth is prone to be slothful; but to-day, when we begin to make ready for the advent of the Divine Child (your special model and pattern), you, my dear children, must also begin to study and to understand your duty and your obligations to God. Consider,

I. That to serve God and love him in your youth, is a bounden and most special duty, the fulfilment of which renders you highly pleasing to God; and

II. That you act very unjustly towards God, if you refuse him this service, and give it to another.

I. God, who is the beginning of all things, has an especial pleasure in the firstlings of his creatures, and desires them to be consecrated in a special manner to his service. This is proved by many laws given to the Jews. "Thou shalt carry the first-fruits of the corn of thy ground to the house of the Lord thy God" (Exod. 23 : 19). "You shall separate first fruits to the Lord" (Numb. 15 : 19). And: "Sanctify unto me every first-born, as well of men as of beasts (Exod. 13 : 2). In the very beginning of the world he regarded the sacrifice of Cain with displeasure and disgust, because what Cain offered were not the first fruits; Abel, on the contrary, offered the first, not the second fruits.

Even amongst men, my dear brethren (as you only need to be reminded), the first fruits are the most pleasing and acceptable. According to the general opinion, the first fruits of a tree are the best of the season. The first fruits even of common vegetables, such as potatoes, turnips, peas and beans, may be set before the greatest lords, because they are the first fruits; although when these things grow older and larger they are not valued. What trouble do not gardeners give themselves, and how do they not boast, if they succeed in producing the first of any kind of flower!

From this you will easily see that God commands and requires of us, in a special manner, to devote the time of youth to his love and honor. For, what is youth but the first fruit of human life? It is the flower of life, as St. Augustine says, speaking to young people: "To you my words are addressed, young people, who are in the bloom of life;" and St. Thomas Aquinas says: "A young man offers whatever he gives to God from the best part, the flower and vigor of his life;" while, on the other hand, he adds: "An old man offers the dregs of his life." What, then, could be more agreeable to that Lord, who, in the Old Testament, so expressly excluded unclean animals from being offered to him in sacrifice, than the service of still unspotted innocence? How often has not the world experienced, in difficulties and dangers, that when an angry God refused to be appeased by processions, or fasting, or alms, he yielded at last to the prayers of little children, and, moved with pity, restrained his hand from chastising?

Hence it is that the devil, the enemy of God and man, directs all his efforts to rob the Creator of what is most pleasing to him; to make the first fruits of life a sacrifice to hell. Therefore he lays many a private and public snare for the young. Bad company, bad books, papers, and pictures, a thousand dangerous occasions and corrupt examples are his chosen instruments to this end. On this account, the time of youth is

not inaptly called the time of temptations and of combat. But from that very circumstance, it is evident that youth is something very precious and valuable, since the proud spirit of evil makes so many attacks on it, and tries so hard to overcome it.

It is evident, too, that they who remain true to God during their youth, and preserve their innocence, offer a most agreeable sacrifice to him. What wonder is it for an old man, who has lost all taste for pleasure, to live a chaste, retired, and temperate life? The near approach of death shows such a one the vanity of earthly joys, and directs his thoughts to eternity! But to fly and avoid sin at a time when everything invites to sin; to love God in those years in which the freshness of youth inclines us to love creatures; to avoid dangerous occasions and bad company, when others of the same age invite us to go; to live temperately, when others spend their time in drinking and gambling; to remain modest, humble, and chaste, although the fire of youth excites the majority to freedom, vanity, pride, and sensual pleasures—in a word, not to sin when sin is so easy, to serve God when there are so many temptations to abandon him, that is a proof of solid virtue, and a sure sign that we really love God above all things.

Consequently, it is no wonder that they are loved most tenderly by the Almighty God, that he protects them with fatherly care, and bestows on them his choicest graces. They are like Benjamin, of whom the patriarch Jacob said: "The best beloved of the Lord shall dwell confidently in him; as in a bride-chamber shall he abide all the day long, and between his shoulders shall he rest" (Deut. 33 : 12). What great tenderness and favor our Saviour showed to the young during his mortal life! "Suffer the little children to come unto me; and, embracing them, and laying his hands upon them, he blessed them" (Mark 10 : 14, 16). Who was it of whom we read: "And Jesus looking on him, loved him"? (Ibid 21). It was a young man, who came to him and said: "Master, all these things (the command-

ments of God) I have observed from my youth" (Ibid 20). Who was it whom Jesus loved most among the twelve Apostles? (John 13 : 23.) Was it not John, the youngest and most innocent of all? Three persons Jesus raised from the dead, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Naim, and Lazarus; and all of them were young. In a word, he had as much care for the young as for his own person; "He that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me" (Matt. 18 : 5). And on the other hand, he threatens most severely those who give scandal to even the least of the little ones that believe in him. It were better for them to have a millstone tied round their necks, and to be cast into the sea (Ibid 6). "O young people, who are in the bloom of age," I must repeat with St. Augustine, see, how much God loves you! See, how concerned he is for your salvation, and how much he desires to be served, honored, and loved by you! Do you not see

II. How unjustly you act when you refuse him this service, honor, and love, and give them to another?

The modern idea impressed upon many is that more liberty should be allowed to the young than the old in the matter of idleness, sensual amusements and carnal lusts. Such is the opinion of friends, relatives, nay, even of parents themselves. The boy, the girl, they say, is still young, and can well be allowed some license. Old, prudent, and often sensible men and women speak in this way; What is the use of troubling about it? When we were young we did the same (more's the pity!). Young people must have their fling. The sooner they sow their wild oats, the better! With like vain talk young folks encourage each other. We are still young, they say, with the fool in the Book of Wisdom: "The time of our life is short" (Wisd. 2 : 1), who knows how long it will last? "Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good

things that are present; let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments. Let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered. Let no meadow escape our riot" (Ibid 6, 7, 8). We are still young: We can serve God afterwards.

What fiend has taught you to draw such false conclusions? For God, to whom you owe your whole life, you reserve your old age, or that part of your life in which everything will conspire against virtue and piety. Bodily discomforts increase day by day; vicious habits and inclinations always grow stronger with age; the manifold cares of business and domestic concerns multiply as life advances. Is this the time, I ask you, that you reserve for God? Do you consider that honorable? None of you likes to have an aged servant, nay, you often dismiss your servants because they are too old, and hardly able to attend to their duties, seeking for others who are young and strong. How much more does not God require the service of youth, so as to have the first fruits of life? How displeased, too, he will be, if one who has exhausted the vigor of his youth in sin, gives only the residue and dregs of his life to virtue. The pure gold is given to the world, the flesh, and the devil, while the dross is reserved for God. The devil gets the precious pearl, God only the empty shell; the world the flour of the wheat, God only the husks and chaff; the flesh gets the vigorous strength and freshness of youth, God has no service from it until it becomes dried up and withered. In a word, my young friends, you wish to serve God when you are tired and wearied of serving the devil, and when you have lost all taste for sensual pleasures. That is not offering to the Lord a spotless young lamb, but rather a foul pig.

If the Lord has before now cursed those who kept the best of dumb animals for themselves, and brought the worst to be sacrificed, what a dreadful curse must they not expect, who

deliberately give to God the rotten sheep of their old age, after having promised in Baptism, by a solemn vow, to consecrate their whole lives to the service of God? Will you begin to live to God, when you are about to leave this life, gray-haired and broken down with sinful years? Read the narratives of Holy Scripture, and see what became of Her and Onan, Amnon and Absalom, Ophni and Phineas, and you will discover that they were all stricken by the hand of God in the midst of the vices of their youth, and had no time left to work out their salvation. But even if God has patience with you, and allows you time to do penance, to amend your life, to serve him in your old age, and go at last to heaven, will all your good works atone for the injuries you offered to God in your youth? No matter how great your penance, how sincere your amendment, it will still remain true for all eternity, that you have shamefully offended God, who loved you so much, that you have robbed him of the best part of your life, and given it to the devil. When the penitent David thought of this, he cried out in grief and sorrow: "Every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears" (Ps. 6 : 7). O my dear young friends, while you have it in your power, will you not save yourselves the necessity for such tears? Will you not save yourselves from being forced to cry out one day to God, full of sorrow and repentance: "The sins of my youth do not remember" (Ps. 24 : 7). From being forced to lament: "Oh, beautiful time of youth, what has become of thee! Where are the best years of my life gone? Hours and days have been spent mostly in useless play, in vanities, sensual gratifications, fopperies, idleness, and impurity! The flower and vigor of my life I have given to the devil, although it belongs to God alone by right! Oh, Lord, remember not the sins of my youth!" My whole youth is lost, and I must say with St. Augustine: "I went about in my youth, and the more I grew in age, the more shameful did my vanity become." Ah, most

loving God, too late have I known thee, too late have I loved thee!

Hear, therefore, all ye who have not yet begun to love God as you ought, what the great Creator wants from us: My dear son, my dear daughter, give me your heart. You have left it long enough in the power of my enemy; am I never to find any place in it? "Give me thy heart;" begin now, at least, to serve me. Hearken to me, pious youth, guileless little children! Strive with all your power to preserve your innocence unstained and to remain faithful to God. One day you will fully know what a desirable and precious privilege it is to serve God from childhood. What a happiness it will be, after ten, twenty, thirty years of this mortal life, to be able to say to the Lord, with the young man in the Gospel: "I have observed all these things from my youth!" (Mark 10 : 20.)

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE DUTIES OF MASTERS AND MISTRESSES TOWARD THEIR SERVANTS.

"*Sending two of his disciples, he said to him: Art thou he that art to come?*"—Matt. 11 : 2, 3.

Did John not know that Christ was the Messias? Had he not seen with his own eyes, when baptizing in the river Jordan, the Holy Ghost descend on him in the form of a dove, and heard the voice of the heavenly Father saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"? (Matt. 3 : 17.) Had he not pointed him out to the people as the Lamb of God? Why then does he ask: "Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another?" Did he, perhaps, doubt that Christ was the long-promised and expected Saviour of the world? No, St.

John's embassy to his divine Master was simply designed to instruct his disciples in the way of salvation. John sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he were the Messias, not because he doubted it, but because, as he was near death, he wished to put an end to the doubts of his disciples, and give them over to Christ. Christian masters and mistresses, learn from this

I. That you are bound to look diligently after the salvation of your servants;

II. What you must do for them, and what advantages you derive from the fulfilment of that duty; and

III. What specially concerns all parents in regard to the training of their children, and all housekeepers in the care of their servants.

I. Subjects are not placed in obedience for the advantage of their rulers, but rather the rulers are placed over the subjects to look after them, to protect them from their enemies, and by wisdom and prudence to secure to them peace, harmony, and prosperity; therefore, subjects owe their rulers far more gratitude, on account of the charge that God has laid upon them, than rulers owe their subjects for services rendered, and honors shown. That a master is bound to give sufficient board and lodging to his servants, according to the general custom; that he must attend to their wants with Christian charity when they are sick, and do his best to restore them to health, although they cannot work nor earn anything for him while in that state; that he is bound by the law of justice to pay them their full wages at the proper time—these duties are recognized all over the world. But the necessary care does not consist in that alone. I speak now to you, Christian masters and mistresses, and I tell you that there is a far higher obligation incumbent on you. You must be Apostles in your own households, you must act as preachers and priests to your servants, and take the greatest interest in their eternal salvation. Your

servants are subject to you and must obey you; but, as you must confess, they are not more subject to you than you are to God. Now, God will not exercise any authority over you unless on the condition that he has imposed upon himself, of furthering thereby your eternal salvation. To this end, his plans are directed; for this, he has pledged his own divine word. Is it not, then, only just and right for you to use your authority in the same way, that is, to take a deep interest in the eternal welfare of your servants?

But why should I look for arguments to convince you of this duty, when it is so clearly explained? If divine providence has placed some of you in such a position that you must give your liberty and your service to another man, be not afflicted on that account. Be subject to your masters, and true to them; obey them readily in all that is not contrary to the law of God. You have much to expect from them; not only are they bound to give you food and wages, but something far more precious. And what is that? "For they watch as being to render an account of your souls" (Hebr. 13 : 18). If they are careless in doing so, God will demand your souls at their hands on the last day.

II. There are three things, principally, in which a master must attend to the spiritual welfare of his servants. He must give them *good example, instruction* and *correction.* Good example, so that he may never scandalize his servants or lead them into sin. Good instruction, by which he must often exhort them to good. He must chastise them, with charity, when they sin against God, or when they are idle and lazy, or when they are in dangerous occasions or company, so as to save them from sin and vice. If he is wanting in any of these three things, he does not perform his duty, and will be punished by God as an unfaithful steward.

Oh, in how many modern Christian households are these

important duties overlooked or negligently fulfilled! Men and maid-servants certainly have just reason to complain now-a-days, as the disciples of Christ unreasonably did long ago, when they were on the point of perishing in the storm: "Master, doth it not concern thee that we perish?" (Mark 4 : 38.) Master, mistress, is it nothing to you that we are leading a bad life and will be lost? Truly we might say of such masters and mistresses what God says: "Oh, shepherd and idol" (Zach. 11 : 17) for they stand like graven images and let themselves be waited upon and served by others for whom they do nothing. They have heads, and understand not; they have eyes and see not; ears and hear not; mouths and speak not; hands and feet which they do not make use of. That is to say, their whole idea is to be waited upon by their servants, and to get as much work as possible out of them. But they never try to find out the moral faults and failings of their servants; they have no eyes to watch over their lives and conduct, no mouths to exhort them to serve God, no hands to chastise them when necessary, no feet to go before them with good example. Nay, in place of watching over their salvation, they rather help them to eternal ruin; in place of showing them the way to heaven, they lead them to hell. In place of being the shepherds of their souls, they are thieves and murderers who kill the souls and destroy them!

For, what kind of teaching is sometimes given to servants? What use is made of the servant, who is already indifferent enough about pleasing God, so long as he can satisfy his temporal master? He is simply the tool, the instrument of his master's sin. He is made to carry sinful letters, and help to keep up an improper correspondence for his master. He must learn how to lie and cheat, to get drunk, to be vindictive and unjust. What use is made of that maid-servant, who is already little inclined to learn her catechism? She must help in everything that an idle, worldly life and wicked desires sug-

gest to her mistress; or she is made an accomplice in the sin of her master. How many girls there are who go into service innocent, pure, and leave it disgraced and dishonored!

And what kind of example do they get? Do they see their masters, if not in the morning, at least in the evening, kneel down with them to say their prayers? Do they often hear their masters speak of God and holy things? Do they see in them an example of Christian humility and meekness, of peace and unity, of resignation to the will of God, of the frequent reception of the Sacraments? That is the way in which a Christian household should be governed. All the servants must follow his good example, if the words of the Gospel can truly be applied to their master: "Himself believed, and his whole house." But, oh, Christians, how terrible is the force of bad example, especially when given by one whom we must honor and respect! Tell me, now, how will it be with simple, uneducated, ignorant people, as most of those are who must earn their bread by waiting on others, when they see that their masters and mistresses, with whom they are in daily contact, lead bad and wicked lives; that they have little taste for piety, but much for vice; that they are constantly quarrelling with each other, and cursing and swearing at their children; that they are prone to back-biting and calumny? What, think you, must be the effect of example such as this on souls that are already inclined to evil? Is it not natural to expect that in a short time they will resemble their masters and mistresses, that they will learn from them to speak ill of others, to curse and swear, and to be slothful and lazy in the service of God? Certainly, if they were innocent and virtuous when entering into service, they would leave it full of vice and wickedness.

And how are they corrected of their faults? If the man-servant, through mere carelessness, is not in his place at the proper time; if the maid-servant forgets a message, or breaks anything by accident, then the master or mistress is angry

enough. There is no end of cursing, swearing and abuse. The poor servant is turned away or deprived of a part of the wages agreed upon, so that such a fault may never be committed again. But if the man-servant misses Mass on Sundays and holydays through sloth, and is given to cursing and swearing; if the maid-servant runs out at night and frequents dangerous company, very little is thought of that, so long as they do their work in the household. Nay, no account at all is taken of such faults; masters do not even wish to examine into them for fear of disagreeable consequences, until at last there is a public scandal, and the only excuse is: "I knew nothing about it; if I had heard of it sooner, I should have prevented it." And how does it happen that you knew nothing about it? Was it not your duty to have known of it? Should you not have kept a watchful eye on your servants? It is indeed a strange thing that sins are committed in your own house, almost under your eyes, and you are the last to hear of them! You know very well how your servants attend upon you, and whether they are lazy or diligent. You cannot be too sharp in seeing whether they ever take anything out of the house by stealth. You are sure to find that out; for you spy about with lynx-eyed vigilance for faults of that kind; nay, if you have any grounds for suspecting them of dishonesty, you lay traps for them, in order to prove their guilt, thus tempting simple souls, and placing them in the occasion of sin, for according to the proverb, "Opportunity makes the thief." See how careful you are to correct the faults that your servants commit against yourself; but you know nothing and care to know nothing, of the sins that are committed against God by those subject to you, over whose souls God has placed you as shepherds and guardians.

It seems to me that I hear many say in their own minds what the high-priests said to Judas, when he repented of having betrayed to them the innocent Jesus: "What is that to us?

Look thou to it" (Matt. 27 : 4). "What is that to us?" thinks the master or mistress sometimes. "What have *I* to do with the consciences of my servants? What difference does it make to me whether they lead a good or a bad life? If they wish to go to heaven, it is their own affair. They are old enough to understand what they are about. If they are lost forever, it is their own fault. I have not to look after their souls; I have made no agreement to instruct them, and lead them on to virtue. I give them food and wages if they serve me properly; they cannot expect anything more from me." But what sort of talk is that? Christians, is the salvation of your servants, then, nothing to you? Is it a matter of indifference to you whether they are lost or saved? What becomes of the law of Christian charity which binds every one to promote his neighbor's salvation as much as possible? (Ecclus. 17 : 12.) Hear what St. Paul writes to the Romans, and learn from him what an important matter it is for you: "A servant," he says, "to his own lord standeth or falleth" (Rom. 14 : 4). Have you made no contract with him to look after his soul? Woe to you, indeed, if you forget that duty! The Almighty God, the Sovereign Master of all, has made that contract with your servants in your name, and he will, one day, require their souls at your hands. Not only your own sins, but the sins of your servants which you could have prevented, will be the cause of your damnation. Therefore, your own advantage requires you to take care of their spiritual welfare. To make this clearer to you, I will now speak of

III. The great merit which you acquire to your own souls, Christian parents and housekeepers, by being co-operators and helpers of Jesus Christ in this important duty. There is nothing more God-like than to work for the salvation of souls that have been redeemed at such a great price. And what a splendid opportunity you have of doing so! I will con-

sider merely the temporal advantages you may derive from that. The quiet, peace, unity, security, industry, profit, and prosperity of your whole household depend on the care you take of the souls of your dependants. Let me prove this by your own complaints. How often do you not bewail the trouble and annoyance your servants cause you! I do not mean to say that your complaints are groundless. I grant, even, that you have grounds enough for them. One servant is a quarrelsome, ill-humored fellow, who can leave no one in peace. Another is slothful and lazy at work, but quick enough in coming to his meals. You must be always looking after them; if you turn your back, they will idle their time. The maid-servant is obstinate; she will do nothing at the proper time, but takes up now one thing, now another, just as it suits her humor. She must be told to do a thing ten times before she obeys. If you venture to speak a serious word to her, she has twenty answers ready. You have reason to suspect another of being unfaithful to you, as she keeps company with people of doubtful honesty. You cannot leave anything in her hands. Whatever occurs in the house, she tells the whole neighborhood. My children, too (complains a mother), sometimes say things they canot understand, as they are so young; I do not know where they learned them; there must be some one in the house who indulges in improper conversation. Such are the daily crosses that one has to bear from one's own servants. Masters and mistresses will tell you that their servants are the cause of all their uneasiness, chagrin, impatience, cursing, and sinfulness. How fortunate, they add, are people who have good and faithful servants! I agree with you, dear friends, that it is a most intolerable, vexatious, and wretched thing for servants to be so unfaithful to their duty. But do you know whence the whole trouble comes? They do not lead pious and Christian lives; they do not fear and love God as they ought; they have no inclination

for piety, and are not encouraged nor exhorted to it by any one. If they go once or twice a year to confession and Communion, and hear a short Mass on Sundays and holydays, that is all that their masters ask them to do for their souls, or all that they, through want of encouragement and instruction, care to do for God and for heaven. In other things, it seems almost as if they were excommunicated. They never hear a sermon, never come to Catechism, and so never have a chance of learning how to fear the Lord, or to acknowledge their own faults. Is it, then, any wonder, that since they are so lazy and unfaithful in the service of God, they are also wanting in fidelity to their earthly masters?

Do you wish to mend matters? Yes (you answer): And to that end must I send away my present servants, and hire new ones? No, I can give you far better advice than that. See to it only that those who are now in your service lead pious and Christian lives. Then your complaints will cease at once, for if they are good Christians, they will live in peace with each other, and there will be an end to quarrelling and disputes; they will be ready to help each other, and will vie with each other in readiness to help you.

Fathers and mothers of families, see, then, to it, first of all, that you yourselves are good and pious, and after that, see, with all possible diligence, that your children and servants also lead good and holy lives. Often call to mind that God has placed you over them as the pastors of their souls, and that you must one day render a strict account of the manner in which you have performed that duty. If this thought does not move you, then remember that your welfare and that of your whole family depend on whether you all lead holy lives or not. Take as your example that wise woman, of whom the Book of Proverbs says: "She hath looked well to the paths of her house;" (Prov. 31 : 27) that is, she knew everything that occurred in the house, and what her dependants were doing.

So great, indeed, was her watchfulness that it sometimes interfered with her night's rest: "She hath risen in the night and given a prey to her household, and victuals to her maidens" (Ibid 15). And not only did she provide sufficiently for their bodily nourishment, but also she looked after their souls: "She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue" (Ibid 26). That is to say, she opened her mouth to teach her dependants true wisdom, to give them instruction regarding their eternal salvation and the practice of virtue; and thereby, she gained great fame, and was looked upon as the most fortunate woman in the world: "Her children," and her servants, "rose up and called her blessed" (Ibid 28). Imitate her example, Christian fathers and mothers, and happiness will reward your zeal for souls, if not here, at least hereafter, where master and servant, mistress and maid, will differ only according to their different merits; where we shall all be masters, since we shall have everything we desire and wish for; and where we shall all be servants of our great God, in whom we shall also have a most loving Friend, in his eternal household, the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

EVENING EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

"*Who art thou?*"—John 1 : 19.

A very necessary question for every Christian to ask himself! If I say to myself: "Who art thou?" I must answer: I am a human being, created by a merciful God for no other end but to love and serve him, to honor and praise him with all my thoughts, words, and actions. Many duties and cares distract me, and continually prevent me from seeing whether I really

do everything for this one end. Hence it is necessary for me to recollect myself occasionally, and examine how far I have strayed away from my true end. If I ask myself after such an examination: *"Who art thou?"* I will frequently find that instead of being the friend and child of God, I am really his enemy and the child of the devil; and that therefore I must repent of my misdeeds, do penance for them, and try to avoid them in future. What salutary thoughts are suggested by that question: *"Who art thou?"* It includes all the points that constitute our daily, and especially our nightly, examination of conscience. Understand, then:

I. In what manner the true Christian should examine his conscience, every evening, before retiring to rest; and

II. What profit is derived from such a practice, faithfully fulfilled.

I. A proper examination of conscience at bed-time consists principally in three points:

1. In heartfelt gratitude for all the benefits we have received from God during the day;

2. In carefully examining ourselves to see whether we have spent the day well, or ill, according to our last end;

3. In exciting ourselves to sorrow and repentance for the sins we have committed, with a firm resolution to live better in future.

1. And in the first place, as far as gratitude is concerned, is it not right that we should at least, once in the day, return thanks, with all our hearts, to that Lord who has overwhelmed us with benefits during the whole day—nay, even during our whole lives? O man! *"who art thou?"* how dost thou live? With the exception of the morning, when, as I have no doubt, you say your morning prayer, like all good Christians, you spend the greater part of the day in sleeping, eating, drinking, talking, working, and in the ordinary domestic duties that are

required by your state of life. I admit that if you do all this with a good intention and direct your actions to your last end, while you are in the state of grace, all these actions are holy and meritorious, and if, while performing them, you frequently raise your heart to God, they become an unceasing prayer. Still, ought you not to give to God, who preserves you in life, and protects you from countless dangers of soul and body, at least a quarter of an hour in the evening, after your day's work, before you retire to rest, to open your heart to him and thank him for the benefits he has bestowed on you? Not to do so is to be guilty of the basest ingratitude.

Suppose that you were sick, blind, deaf, dumb, or crippled, and that some one had to-day healed you; with what gratitude would you not think of that man, this evening, when you are going to bed for the first time with your senses perfectly free from all bodily ailment! And how can you retire to rest without thanking God, who has given you to-day and always your sight, hearing, speech, your sound limbs, your health, and your life? Nay, if you give a poor beggar a piece of bread, he will not go away without thanking you; but God gives you daily abundant means for your bodily support; does he deserve no thanks for his goodness? The good God gives you rest during the night. You sleep, surrounded by his benefits; is it possible that you can go to bed without first thanking him? If so, you would be more ungrateful than the dog, which fawns upon you before he leaves your room for the night. Behold! if the evening examen consisted of nothing else but a thanksgiving to God for all his daily benefits, would it not be an injustice to omit it even once?

2. The second point in this examen is the discussion of our conscience, and of our actions during the day. The careful and prudent merchant or business man always looks over his accounts in the evening, comparing his receipts with his expenditures, his losses with his gains, making every entry in his

ledger with punctuality and precision. People augur ill of a business man who does not properly balance his books, or who allows his accounts to remain in a careless or confused disorder. A gambler who has spent five or six hours in playing cards (especially if the stakes are somewhat high), counts his money when he comes home to find out whether he has won or lost. How much more careful both the merchant and the gambler would be in making up their accounts if they knew that they could thereby make good all their losses! Oh, Christian! "*who art thou?*" A merchant whom God has sent into this world to buy for yourself eternal goods. Your last end, the great object of your life, is God and heaven. The hour will come when you shall hear the words: "Give an account of your stewardship!" (Luke 16 : 2.) Show what you have gained with the talents intrusted to you. Woe to you, then, if your books are not balanced, if your accounts are not in order! Again: you are engaged in a continual game; your opponents are the devil, the world, and the flesh. The stake is not a penny, not a dollar, nor two dollars, but your own immortal, precious, and only soul, and eternal happiness which can be won or lost each moment! For God's sake, think how much depends on this dreadful game! At one time the Christian wins, at another he loses, according as he overcomes or yields to temptation, to sin. All day long you are engaged in your domestic and other duties. You are distracted with all kinds of thoughts and cares, so that you cannot give the proper amount of attention to the business of your salvation. You have seen, heard, thought, spoken, and done a great deal. May it not easily happen that you have now and then lost sight of your last end, and suffered great loss? Certainly your conscience always does its work; it warns and reproves if we do anything serious against the law of God; but during the day, amid the tumult of temporal affairs, it is with conscience as with one who tries to speak alongside a rushing torrent; he

opens his mouth and says different things, but the noise of the water drowns his words. Besides that, our evil inclinations blind us at the time of temptation, so that we either take no notice of the sin we commit, or else regard it as trifling. It is only afterwards, when we enter into ourselves and take time to consider the matter attentively, that we find out its deformity and gravity. What value did Esau set on his birth-right when he sold it for a mess of pottage? He came home tired and hungry; he saw the warm food which his brother Jacob was preparing, and felt such an inclination for it, that he at once and forever relinquished his birth-right, and, "taking bread and the pottage of lentils, he ate, and drank, and went his way, making little account of having sold his first birth-right" (Gen. 25 : 33, 34). But when his eyes were opened afterwards and he saw the effects of his gluttony, and learned that he had lost his father's blessing, "he roared out with a great cry" (Ibid. 27 : 34). Ah, my dear brethren, often we sell our right to heaven for a miserable mess of pottage, for a vile pleasure, or some temporal gain! Yet, like Esau, in the heat of passion, we think nothing of our loss. Afterwards, when our eyes are opened, we think more seriously of it. And that is what we should do every day, when we have got rid of the cares of business, and our evil inclinations are stilled.

Let each one nightly recall to his memory all the thoughts, words, and actions of the past day, all the duties and obligations of his state, asking his soul: "How much dost thou owe my Lord?" How have I served him to-day? When and how did I rise this morning? What were my first thoughts? What did I do afterwards? With whom did I associate? What business did I undertake, and with what intention? What joys or sorrows have I had? Have my pleasures been lawful, have I borne sorrow patiently? You, my eyes, what do you owe my Lord? Have you seen, or wished to see, anything unlawful to-day? You, my ears, what do you owe? Have

you, perhaps, heard with pleasure something contrary to purity or charity? And you, my tongue, what do you owe? How much, where, how, have you spoken? Have you injured or lessened the good name of another? Have you given way to lying, cursing, swearing, quarrelling, or scandalous talk? You, my hands, what do you owe? Have you sinned to-day by impurity or injustice? You, my feet, what do you owe? Have you brought me into dangerous company, to waste my precious time in dissipation, drinking, or gambling?

3. In the same way, each one may examine himself upon his own particular duties: "How much dost thou owe my Lord," as a father, or as a mother? Have I been careful to train up my children for their last end? Have I kept them away from evil, and led them on to good? Have I punished them when they did wrong? Have I given them good example? How much dost thou owe as husband or wife? Have I always acted according to the love and respect that we owe each other? Have I, perhaps, through excessive love, done something against my conscience, or given cause, by ill-temper, for suspicions, jealousy, and sadness? How much dost thou owe as shopkeeper or tradesman? Have I taken advantage of any one to-day in my work or business? Have I done everything with a good intention for God's sake? How much dost thou owe as son or daughter? Have I always shown obedience, respect, and filial love to my parents? Now, if I find that I have managed matters well according to the Christian law and the divine will, I must again thank the good God for having preserved me in preference to many others from worse sins during the day, and I must heartily rejoice in the Lord and go quietly to rest. But if I find that I have done wrong, I must blot out my faults at once by sorrow and repentance, and make a firm resolution to avoid them in future. And this last point of the examen is most important and must not, by any means, be omitted. For, will you dare to go to sleep without first re-

gaining the friendship of God? Suppose you were to die during the night? It has happened to very many to go to bed at night strong and healthy, and to be found dead in the morning. St. Paul warns us all: "Let not the sun go down upon your anger" (Ephes. 4 : 26). Why? Because you do not know if you will live to see the sun rise again. Does not even Jesus Christ himself warn you: "Be you, then, also ready, for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come" (Luke 12 : 40), and bring you from time into eternity? Can that not be the case with you to-night? If it were so, where would you go, unhappy man? Your body would be found dead in the bed in the morning, but your soul would be in hell! Could you go to sleep peacefully under such circumstances?

II. Do not allow that dangerous guest to remain with you any longer! Drive it away, at once, before you go to bed, by heart-felt sorrow. There is no softer pillow than a good conscience. How calmly and peaceably he sleeps who can say to himself: Now, I have squared my accounts with God, and I am quite ready to obey his will! I do not refuse to live, I am not afraid to die. We have a good Master to obey; I give him my body and soul. I am a friend, a child of God; if I die to-night, I shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. What a consolation, Christians, to be able to say that with truth! But, sinner, think of the extreme danger in which you are! Do not go to bed until you have, through fear of death and judgment, changed yourself into another man; until, by perfect contrition and detestation of your sins, you have made matters all right. God, who before was angry with you, will no longer regard you as his enemy, but will pardon your sin, and receive you again into his grace and friendship. What were the circumstances under which Assuerus held out his sceptre to Esther as a sign of his love and favor? She saw the king looking fierce and angry, and she grew pale with fright and

was on the point of fainting away. Assuerus thereupon came down from his throne, supported the fainting queen in his arms, and laid the sceptre on her breast. This is a symbol of a soul standing before the judgment seat of God, and trembling at the recollection of its past sins. Ah, Christians, who sin during the day, place yourselves in the evening as poor criminals before the angry countenance of your King and Judge. Trembling with fear, go down on your knees and repent of your sins, and you will appease your Judge, and turn him into your loving Spouse, who will at once receive you with love and tenderness into his arms. Then, you may think and say, to your great consolation: Now I am again a child and friend of God: "In peace, in the selfsame, I will sleep and I will rest."

Moreover, what great advantages you can gain from your evening examen! What purity of conscience must not be the result of such a daily custom! You know what happens in a leaky ship. The water is always forcing its way in on every side, and there must be some one to pump it out now and then. If that is neglected, the ship will soon fill and sink. It is the same with your conscience. Daily, almost hourly, sins find their way into it, either in thought, word, or deed; you must, therefore, be careful to get rid of them again. Do that, at least, each evening. Pump the water out of your spiritual ship; that is, cleanse your conscience from the sins that stain it, lest it become too full of them and be miserably lost. And what a safeguard it is against future sin when you make your evening examen with a firm resolution of amendment! What little trouble you have afterwards in preparing for confession, when you thus examine your faults and failings, and imprint them on your memory! There is no doubt that many confessions are bad on account of the sins that are overlooked through culpable negligence in examining the conscience, especially in the case of those who seldom go to confession. Such persons can hardly find a sin to confess; but they would find

enough if they examined themselves daily. As it is, they keep no account, they pay no attention to their actions, and live in a state of indifference, absorbed in criminal pleasures or in temporal cares. Is it any wonder that their sins should escape their memory and be forgotten? Alas! the devil will not forget those sins; he will, one day, bring them forward in judgment against those negligent people. I do not say that you are bound under pain of sin to make that examen; and therefore, you must not be anxious on that account; but think only how reasonable and how advantageous the practice is. Let no one imagine that it is fit only for religious in a convent. If these latter find the practice necessary, in spite of their multiplied devotions and regular rule of life, how much more necessary is it for lay-people, who, during the day, pay less attention to themselves and to their own thoughts, words, and actions, and have less time to spend in devotion, and recollection of spirit? There are many Christian families in which master and mistress kneel down every evening with their children and servants, to say the Rosary or the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and to make the examen of conscience, reciting afterwards their usual evening prayers. What joy God and his Angels must have in such assemblies! What blessings such families receive from God! In such homes, the children learn from their youth to fear God and to keep their conscience pure; the servants are encouraged to piety and devotion, and thus father and mother, master and mistress, are helped to fulfil their two principal duties. Thus the children and servants are kept out of the streets after dark, and are prevented from spending the summer evenings sitting at the door till late at night, laughing and joking, and exposing themselves to the danger of sin; for they certainly do not then say the Rosary or night prayers, or make their examen of conscience. On the contrary, a great deal of sin is committed in that way, and, humanly speaking, it would be impossible in such circumstances to avoid sin. Woe to

parents who allow such things to take place! Another advantage of the evening examen is, that the children who have been accustomed to it from infancy, when they are settled in life, teach that devotion in turn to their own families, and thus piety and the fear of the Lord are transmitted from one generation to another. Holy, indeed, I repeat, are such families! If we do not wish to follow this example of family worship and self-examination (although it were much to be desired that every household should do so), at least, let each one practise this devotion for himself, and let every master and mistress often exhort their children and servants thereto, confiding in the divine promise, of which St. Paul speaks, when he declared to the Corinthians: "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (Cor. 11 : 31). Yes, let such be your resolution; and begin this very evening, and continue to judge ourselves daily by the evening examen, that we may not be judged hereafter. Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Advent.

DUTIES OF SUBJECTS TO THEIR SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL SUPERIORS.

"*And he was subject to them.*"—Luke 2 : 51.

The Son of God subject to man, subject to Mary and Joseph! He who a short time before was teaching the doctors in the Temple, and amazing them by his wisdom, now allows himself to be instructed by a poor Virgin, and by a lowly carpenter, just as if he were an unreasoning child, incapable of governing himself! He whose nod the Angels in heaven are

ready to obey, according to whose will the sun, moon, and stars pursue their ordinary course, allows himself to be ruled and commanded by poor mortals! And why? Because, as the son of God who came into the world, to do the will of his heavenly Father in the most perfect manner, he recognized and honored that father in the persons of his Mother and foster-father. Therefore, was he subject to them. Children, learn from the example of Jesus Christ, how humbly and readily you should obey your parents. Servants, learn from it to obey your masters and mistresses. Christians, all learn from it that you must show proper submission to spiritual and temporal superiors, for:

I. Spiritual and temporal superiors having their lawful authority from God, all are bound to obey them.

II. Spiritual and temporal superiors represent God in the exercise of their authority; therefore, all are bound to obey them with reverence.

I. There are temporal and spiritual superiors, who have authority and power over others, and who can make laws for them and punish those who disobey; but there have been some who denied that this authority comes from God. The heathens taught that God is not at all concerned about the world, that he does not govern it, and that he has left men at perfect liberty to live and act as they please; while they attributed prosperity and adversity to mere chance. They founded this opinion on the differences that there are in individuals. Has not God, they said, made us all alike according to human nature? What is the reason of the great diversity in station that there is amongst us? Must we not conclude from it that God has withdrawn his hand from the world, so that he who is stronger and able to overcome others, can command them and make laws for them? Such was the opinion of the heathens, who not only denied the existence of any authority in human super-

iors, but also refused to acknowledge the authority of divine providence.

It is true that God has made all men alike; true that we are all descended from Adam, and if human nature had remained as it was first created by God, that is, in original innocence, justice, and perfection, there would not be superiors and inferiors, as there now are. There would be no necessity for any one to make or to obey a law, because reason itself would have been sufficient to teach every one his duty, since there would have been nothing in us to contradict its light and its inspiration. But, when this happy state was destroyed by the first sin of Adam, which we all inherit, our nature was corrupted, the light of reason was darkened, the beautiful order of things, according to which the flesh obeyed the spirit, and the spirit obeyed God in all things, was disturbed. Evil desires and inclinations began to rise up against reason and against the spirit, and the whole man, from childhood upwards, was inclined to evil. Under those circumstances it was absolutely necessary to appoint superiors to maintain order amid such confusion, to punish evil, and to restrain corrupt propensities by fear of chastisement; and of course it also became necessary for inferiors to obey their superiors. What would become of the world without this arrangement? If each one were at liberty to do as he pleases, how could men live together in community? If the ship is without a helmsman, what will become of her? She will be blown about by the winds, hither and thither, until she is wrecked. If there is no general to conduct the war, what will become of the army? It will simply be a crowd of disorderly soldiers, who work for different aims, and with different intentions. If there is no master in the school to punish the idle and naughty, what will be the case? The school will simply be a room full of wilful, noisy, and naughty children. "Where there is no Governor, the people shall fall" (Prov. 1 : 14). If you take the rulers out of a state, we shall lead a more

irrational life than brute beasts; no one will trust his neighbor nor have anything to do with him; no one will be sure of his property, nor even of his life.

No, the God of infinite wisdom governs the world! He has created countless hosts of Angels, and yet has divided them most harmoniously into nine choirs, one above the other, and so that one enlightens the other. In the same order he has created the heavens, in which the sun, moon, and stars have their appointed spheres.

How much more necessary is not such order and harmony amongst men! And certainly the God of infinite wisdom has not forgotten it. From the very beginning of the world, he placed Adam over Eve, when he said to the latter: "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee" (Gen. 3 : 16). Both man and woman were superiors over their children. These latter had authority over their descendants, so that according to the natural law, one was subject to the other, and all had to live in a certain order of superiority and inferiority. In the written law, when men were divided into different nations, God placed a superior over each and published this command: "Thou shalt do whatsoever they shall say, that preside in the place, which the Lord shall choose, and what they shall teach thee, according to his law, and thou shalt follow their sentence; neither shalt thou decline to the right hand nor to the left hand. But he that will be proud, and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, that man shall die and thou shalt take away the evil from Israel; and all the people hearing it shall fear, that no one afterwards swell with pride" (Deut. 17 : 10). In the New Law Jesus Christ himself has also confirmed this, when he commanded the Jews as subjects to pay tribute to Cæsar: "Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's" (Matt. 22 : 21). In these words he wished to refute the erroneous opinion of the Jews, who thought that, as the chosen people of God, they should obey

God alone, and not be subject to king or emperor. On another occasion he said to his Apostles and disciples: "The Scribes and Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses; all things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do" (Matth. 23 : 2).

II. Therefore, according to the command of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, superiors have lawful authority to govern and command, while inferiors are bound in justice to obey. And whence have they this authority? From God himself. Hear what St. Paul says so plainly: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers;" and he immediately adds the reason: "for there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God" (Rom. 13 : 1). "Every soul;" no one is exempted; all must obey their superiors—the wife must obey her husband, the son his father, the daughter her mother, the servant his master, the citizen his magistrate, and all subjects their spiritual and temporal superiors. If you ask who made that law, God himself answers: "For there is no power but from God." "By me kings reign, and law-givers decree just things; by me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice" (Prov. 8 : 15). There are many kinds of superiors; all have their authority from God. The apostle does not say there is no king, no prince, no law-giver who does not receive his authority from God, but: "There is no power but from God," and St. Paul concludes: "Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (Rom. 13 : 2). Therefore, Christians: "Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh with fear" (Ephes. 6 : 5).

We all know that the ambassadors and representatives of a king are entitled to the same honor and respect that is due to the king himself whom they represent. Now, all superiors, spiritual and temporal, are representatives of God, and exercise authority on earth in his name, as St. Paul expressly says:

"Fear, for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God's minister" (Rom. 13 : 4). And we read that the people were dissatisfied with Samuel, who had been placed over them as judge, and they wished to have a king. Samuel complained of this to God, but God said to him: "They have not rejected thee, but me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Kings 8 : 7). He showed the same displeasure when the rebellious people rose up against Moses and Aaron: "How long will this people detract me? How long will they not believe me? I will strike them, therefore, with pestilence, and will consume them" (Num. 14 : 11). In the same sense we must understand the words of Christ: "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10 : 16). Therefore, St. Paul says: "Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ; as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men (Ephes. 6 : 5-7). From all this we must now come to the conclusion that we are bound to show the same reverence and obedience to all superiors, no matter what they may be personally.

We owe honor and obedience to all superiors, although they may be corrupt, wicked, sinful, giving bad example, and are thus more worthy of contempt than honor, for in spite of their unworthiness, they possess authority from God and wield it in his stead. The power that God has given them is not bestowed on their holiness of life; it is given to them on account of the office they fill, on account of the duty they must perform. Therefore, says Christ: "All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do." Of whom did our Lord speak? Of the Scribes and the Pharisees. But could any one more wicked than they be found at that time? Christ has threatened them with eternal woe in the very place

where he was exhorting his disciples to obey them. "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you yourselves do not enter in; and those that are going in you suffer not to enter. Woe to you, hypocrites. Because you devour the houses of widows. Woe to you, foolish and blind! Woe to you, blind guides. Because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish; but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Woe to you, hypocrites. Because you are like to whited sepulchres. Outwardly, indeed, you appear to men just; but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?" (Matt. 23 : 13-33.) And yet he commands obedience to such people. He has certainly warned his disciples not to imitate their conduct and manner of life: "According to their works do ye not; for they say and do not." Must obedience, then, be rendered to such wicked, impious men, in every command they give? Certainly, answers Christ, for it still remains true: "They have sitten on the chair of Moses." That alone suffices for them to have lawful authority from God, and therefore, whatever they say to you, you are bound to do, although you must not imitate their wicked conduct. Christ himself obeyed Pilate, that most unjust judge, as having authority from God over his person, and he obeyed him with respect, too, when he said: "Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above" (John 19 : 11).

Finally, we are bound to show honor and obedience to our superiors, even if they are harsh and unmerciful to their inferiors. "Be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward (1 Pet. 2 : 18). Our Lord himself publicly proclaimed the Pharisees and Scribes to be harsh and froward with the people: "For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders; but with a finger of their own they will not move

them" (Matt. 23 : 4). Nevertheless, "Whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do." How respectful David was to king Saul, who persecuted him so unjustly and sought so often to take his life! He once had it in his power to destroy his cruel persecutor and be fully revenged on him, when he found him alone in the cave; but he allowed him to go away without doing him any injury.

This should be a lesson for all Christians, who in any way sin against the respect and obedience they owe their spiritual or temporal superiors. Woe to those who set themselves against the authority and order established by God, and who despise the divine majesty in the persons of those who are invested with power! "They have not rejected thee, but me," says God to superiors nowadays, with the same displeasure toward disobedient subjects as in the days of Samuel. They have despised and cursed me. They have murmured against me, and complained of me. They have spoken against me and brought me into disrepute, by their evil conduct toward my representatives, to whom I have given authority.

Kings and princes are not in the habit of leaving unpunished any insults that are offered to their ambassadors or representatives, but exact full satisfaction. And do you think that the great God will allow an insult offered to his representatives to go unpunished? Do you wish to know how deeply he feels such an insult? Read the 11th chapter of the Book of Numbers, and you will see what happened to those Hebrews who complained of the fatigue they were enduring, and rebelled against Moses, their judge. "And when the Lord heard it, he was angry. And the fire of the Lord being kindled against them, devoured them that were at the uttermost part of the camp" (Num. 11: 1). The same thing happened to Core, Dathan, and Abiron, when they tried to excite the people against Moses by their murmurs and complaints: "The earth broke asunder under their feet, and opening her mouth, de-

voured them with their tents and all their substance. And they went down alive into hell, the ground closing upon them, and they perished from among the people" (Num. 16 : 31-33). And so it happened also to the Jews when they began to murmur against Moses and Aaron, on account of their long sojourn in the desert: "Wherefore the Lord sent among the people fiery serpents, which bit them and killed many of them" (Num. 21 : 6). Christian hearers, we do not hear nowadays of any such terrible punishment being inflicted upon those who murmur against their superiors. Otherwise the world would witness sad tragedies every day. But listen again to the words of St. Paul: "He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." And what has such a one to expect? "They that resist purchase to themselves damnation."

My conclusion is, in the words of St. Peter, be subject to your masters and to all superiors, at all times, in all places, under all circumstances, privately as well as publicly, with proper respect and reverence, as to God himself, because they have their authority from God, and they exercise it in his stead. Honor and obey them for God's sake, whose holy will and commandment is that you honor and obey them. Honor and obey them for the love of Jesus Christ, who gives us an example of the most humble obedience, not only to his poor Mother and foster-father, but also to all those who had spiritual or temporal authority in his time on earth. Honor them with a ready and constant obedience, so that you may reap the exceeding great reward of obedience in the kingdom of God's elect, where all superiority will be at an end, and where the Lord alone shall be exalted. Amen.

SUNDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS.

THE GOOD USE OF TIME.

"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men."—Luke 2 : 59.

The possession of sanctifying grace does not depend upon long life, but on the proper use of time. A zealous Christian can gain more merits for heaven in a month than a tepid Christian in many years. Hence, the Holy Ghost exhorts you, brethren, not only to "redeem the time because the days are evil," but also to "observe the time" that still remains to you. If it were to last a hundred years, O, do not squander a moment of it; but making good use of it, imitate our Lord, increasing not alone in age, but in the grace of God. Take notice, then, that while

I. All are bound to make good use of present and future time for their eternal salvation;

II. Very few attend to this important duty; and

III. That we, my brethren, must be particularly careful to "observe the time."

I. Time is a very precious treasure. Every year that is given to each one of us, what else is it but a fortune that the great Father of all gives to the human soul as to his beloved child? And what a splendid fortune it is! What a rich and fruitful capital, provided only it is well employed and made good use of! So rich is it, and so precious, that if the Saints in heaven could feel any discontent, they would envy us the possession of it, and the greatest torment of the souls in pur-

gatory, the greatest despair of the reprobate in hell, arise from the fact that they can no longer have that precious gift. It is a common and a true saying, that it is only the sick who know the value of health; he who has never been ill cannot value health properly. Let us then hear what they have to say who have lost time forever.

Blessed souls who now behold and possess God securely, I expect no answer from you; for if I were to ask you how you value time, you would say to me, as my faith teaches me already by the holy apostle St. Paul: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2 : 9). Go and tell all men, you would add, that this is the interest we reap from having well invested the capital of the short time of our lives on earth.

Poor Souls who are still in Purgatory, tell us the value of that gift, which the good God bestows on us, when he gives us this fleeting time to live in. Ah, it seems to me I hear you cry: "If we had only one hour!" If we had that priceless treasure that you now possess! We do not ask for a whole year, we would be satisfied with a day or an hour; and what terrible torments we could free ourselves from in that short time! We have misspent only a little of the capital that was given to us; some moments here and there we have lost, and on that account we must now suffer the painful loss and unspeakable torment of not being yet able to possess our highest Good; so that perhaps for many years we must bemoan in this lake of fire the loss of our precious time! "Ah, if only one hour were given to us!" This should suffice to teach you who still live on earth what a precious thing time is.

Lost souls, you who are in hell forever, tell us how we are to value time. Suppose that God placed me as a merchant at the gate of hell, to sell time to the reprobate; how dearly would they purchase it, think you? *Rich glutton*, who are now

in the midst of the flames, and desire a drop of water to cool your tongue, what would you give me for a few minutes of that time which you spent in eating and drinking? Ah, would be his answer, you ask what I would give; ask rather what I would not give. If I had all the treasures of a thousand worlds, I would give them with pleasure. *Cruel Herod,* I have half an hour's time here for you; what will you give me for it? Everything; a thousand kingdoms, if I had them! *Despairing Judas,* where are the thirty pieces of silver that you got for your treason? Will you give them to me? I have got one moment of time for you. Ah, would that I could have it to do penance in! Willingly would I endure all pains and torments imaginable for a million of years, if I could only gain that one moment. But alas! Not one of you shall have a single moment for all eternity. "Time shall be no longer."

Time is the precious gift, the rich treasure that the divine generosity has bestowed upon us all, and upon us alone who still journey through this life to our fatherland; and he has given it to us in such a manner, that nothing really belongs to us on earth but the time that is given us. Time alone belongs to us; whatever else we have belongs to others. Honors, riches, money, food, drink, and clothing, are external things that we cannot have full dominion over to do with as we wish, and they can be taken from us even against our will. Time alone belongs to us, and is fully in our power. No man on earth can take it away from me, unless he deprives me of life. Of course, men may talk to and tempt me, and thus prevent me from doing the good that I wish to do—for instance, from going to Church to hear Mass or a sermon; but they cannot hinder me from employing that same time well or ill, according to my own will and intention. Time is the precious treasure that you, Christians, who are still in the bloom of youth, may naturally look forward to enjoy for a longer period than those who are already advanced in years.

You ask: What shall we do with this rich treasure? Shall we squander it in amusement, idleness, and pleasure-seeking? Oh, no; that would be folly indeed! And what must we do with it, then? We must lay it out at good interest, so that we may enjoy the profit from it for eternity.

II. But, alas, precious time, how thou art thrown away, especially by young people! Such is the complaint of even the heathen philosopher Seneca. He says: "A great part of life is spent in doing evil, the greatest part in doing nothing, and nearly the whole of it in doing what one should not do." What a sad use to make of such a priceless treasure. Let each one examine his conscience, and see how he has hitherto spent the years of his life; will he not find that a great part of them has been spent in doing evil? Perhaps there are some persons who, in their childhood and at the first dawn of reason, committed sins that still burden their consciences, because they never confessed them, or confessed them improperly, through shame, or at all events were wanting in true sorrow and resolution because they remained in the proximate occasion, and never did penance as they ought, and they will be forced to confess that they have not passed a single day on which they did anything really good and meritorious of heaven. Precious time, priceless treasure, that is thus thrown away in a manner that cannot be sufficiently deplored! When I think of it, my heart is like to break with sorrow and repentance. I must say with David: "The sins of my youth do not remember" (Ps. 24 : 7). The first, best, and most precious part of my life, which God has specially reserved for himself, has been snatched away by the devil, with my consent!

Why should precious time be thus wasted? Have we nothing else to do on earth? "Why stand you here all the day idle?" is the question that Christ asks us. Can one of us answer, like the laborers in the Gospel: "No man hath hired

us"? (Matt. 20 : 6, 7.) In fact, young people often say they have nothing to do, they have no household to look after, no children to attend to, and therefore they must do something to pass away the time. Have you really nothing to do? Have you no sins to repent of, for which you still owe a terrible debt to the divine justice? Have you nothing to do? Have you not to gain the friendship of a great God, who is worthy of all love and service from you? Have you not an immortal soul to care for, which, if it is once lost, can never be redeemed and is lost for eternity? Have you not a terrible enemy to conquer, against whose assaults you cannot be too careful in protecting yourself day and night? Have you not a strict judgment to fear, in which an account will be demanded of every idle word, and your good works themselves will be scrutinized? Have you not to prepare for death, that comes like a thief in the night, to hurry you away when you least expect? Have you not to labor for a long eternity to avoid the never-ending pains of hell, to gain the everlasting joys of heaven? And you say that you have nothing to do! Say, rather: "There is nothing more precious than time; but, alas! nothing is valued so little nowadays," or squandered so foolishly! There are many who do not do evil nor live in idleness; but they have their hands and heads full from morning till night. With what? Principally with things that do not concern them, and for which they were not placed in this world. Running around the world, crossing the seas, fatiguing the head with study, filling whole reams of paper, working till the perspiration rolls down our faces, laboring the whole day and breaking our rest at night to scheme and plan, with our minds full of thoughts, our hearts full of desires, and all for this earth, all for this miserable vale of tears, in which we are not to live, but merely to travel like pilgrims. Such are our occupations! Have we not another most important business in which to occupy our time? We are born to gain a kingdom

which cost the Son of God thirty-three years labor, nay, even his very life's blood, to regain for us after we had lost it.

III. My son, my daughter, observe the time that is given to you for such an important business. Let not a particle overpass you. If you lose a moment, you lose a whole kingdom that you might have gained in it. Do not say: I have time enough to gain heaven afterwards. Ah, afterwards, fatal word that has brought many to hell! There is no Christian among the reprobate, who had not the same intention of working out his salvation afterwards. How can you dispose of future time, when you are not certain of a moment? Even if you still have many years to live, according to the divine decree, can you say that afterwards you will have the favorable time, the acceptable time, the time of peace and salvation that the Sacred Scripture speaks of so often? Unhappy Jerusalem, was the cry of our Saviour: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19 : 42, 44). Make a good use, therefore, of the time which you now have, and do not squander the rich treasure on which you must live for eternity. Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good. Let us, my dear Christians, take those words to ourselves, that they may spur us on daily to make a holy use of the time that still remains to us, and that death may not come before we carry out our good resolutions. Alas, what will become of us in that sad night when we shall wish to work good and shall not be able, as Christ warns us: "The night cometh when no man can work"? (John 9 : 4.) While time lasts for us, let us, then, hasten to do penance, to gain grace and to attain heavenly glory.

In all documents the year is mentioned as, "the year of our Lord," or "the year of salvation." The words *Anno Domini* are also written in all contracts, wills, and epitaphs. They

ought to be written also, and with truth, on all the years, weeks, days, and hours of our lives: To-day is the day of the Lord; this hour is the hour of the Lord and of salvation; therefore, it must not be employed for any other purpose, but for the Lord alone and for your salvation. Away, then, with all useless thoughts and words, with all idle and foolish pastimes that have already stolen so many golden hours from you, in which you might have earned an eternity of glory; bid farewell to all these follies forever! In future so divide each day as to give to your body only what is barely necessary for it, and even this do solely for God's sake, to whom all time properly belongs. If you were certain that you had still a hundred years to live, would it be too much if you were to give all that time to God? Would it be too soon for you to commence now to love God alone with your whole heart, who has loved you from all eternity, and created you for no other end but to love him? As God is deserving of all our love, let us, at least, now begin, and with his grace continue to serve him, so that when death comes, be it soon or late, we may be able to say: Go forth, my soul, why shouldst thou fear? Thou hast served God for thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years, and hast not wasted a moment of that time. Go forth from time to the place where thou hast safely invested thy treasure, to a joyful eternity. Amen.

First Sunday After Epiphany.

THE CHOICE OF A STATE OF LIFE.

"*Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?*"—Luke 2 : 49.

This is the end and object for which all of us are created; for this alone we are in the world, that we may know God, love and serve him, and finally be eternally happy with him. Christian children, I have often told you what your duty is to God with regard to your Father's business, and taught you that you must be pious and zealous in the service of your God. But you will not always remain children. A time will come when you must make a choice of a permanent state of life, in which it is the will of God that you should serve him during your lives. Do you think of that? It is a matter that you must early begin to reflect upon seriously and carefully. And, certainly, you require good advice in it. I will give you the best advice:

I. It is with God alone that children and parents should often and carefully take counsel in the choice of a state of life.

II. Many parents and children never think of consulting God in this matter, to the great detriment of both.

I. What shall our son, or our daughter be? is the general question of parents. What state of life shall I enter on? children sometimes ask themselves. Father, mother, children, do you know what depends on this question, and what sort of a business is concerned in it? Is it about hiring a servant, in-

vesting money, gaining or losing property? No, a much greater and more important business is concerned in this question. It is not enough for the daughter to find a rich husband in the married state, nor for the son to obtain a rich office or situation, nor is it enough for the son or daughter to enter a well-regulated and holy community in the religious state; all this will not give a satisfactory solution to the question. The question is about a state of life, on the choice of which generally depends either heaven or hell for all eternity; the eternal happiness of those young people, or their eternal misery in everlasting fire. And how is that? Cannot God bring all men to heaven? Of course he can, and will do it, too, if we only earnestly ask him to do so. Can we not save our souls in any state of life? Of course we can; but remember that not every one can work out his salvation in any state, because a certain state of life is a certain way in which divine Providence, ordering all things in number, weight, and measure, leads a certain man to eternal salvation; and to this state God gives for that man suitable helps and powerful graces, which would not be found in another state, and without which that man, although, absolutely speaking, he could, but generally speaking, would not persevere in good and save his soul, or would do so only with difficulty. It is evident, then, that our salvation does not always depend on the holiness of the state we make choice of, but on the conformity of that state with the will of God, and with the arrangements of his Providence that he made for us from all eternity. Thousands of both sexes have saved their souls in the ecclesiastical state; but that boy or that girl would be eternally lost in it. Thousands of both sexes have lost their souls in the secular state, and yet that boy or that girl will gain heaven in it. There are thousands now in hell, who, if they had embraced another state of life, would be in heaven; and there are thousands now happy in heaven, who would have died miserably and lost their souls, if they had

not chosen the state appointed for them by God. Even at this moment there are thousands leading bad lives, who will die an unhappy death and be lost, because they disregarded the divine will in embracing a state of life. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!" (Rom. 11 : 33.) and at the same time, how just!

There is great need of counsel and deliberation for parents and children, when the question is asked: What shall my son or my daughter be? What state of life shall I embrace? What state has God called me to? In what state can I save my soul according to the decrees of Providence? Who can tell me this? Whom am I to ask about it? Whose advice shall I seek? Who can give me salutary counsel in such an important matter, so that I can accept his decision? It is God, and God alone who has all the necessary knowledge, and who sees clearly what is good or bad for the soul of each one at all times and in all circumstances. He it is also who uses his knowledge for the greater good of man, when he calls him to a certain state of life. It is God, and God alone, who has prepared for each one a special grace, called the grace of vocation, by which he will lead each one to the proper state of life. It is God, and God alone, who has reserved for himself the office of decreeing the state of life that each one must embrace, and he never allows any one else to perform this office. An earthly father can and must look after the Christian education of his children; he must have a care of their support, nourishment, goods, and property; but in what concerns their own persons, that is, their free will in the choice of a state of life, no one but God can direct and ordain therein!

Why is it looked upon as such a great sin to select a state of life without being called to it by God? Certainly, because all states, with the sole exception of that appointed for us by God, are very dangerous and injurious to our salvation; and

the man who is where he is not called by God is out of his proper place. I do not say that it is a mortal sin not to follow the call of God, but I must maintain that it is placing one's self in great danger of future sins, and, consequently, of eternal damnation; thus incurring the danger of hearing the terrible sentence: "I called and you refused. You have despised all my counsel. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock. When sudden calamity shall fall on you and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand....Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear;....because they did not consent to my counsel" (Prov. 1 : 24). All this forces me to the necessary conclusion, I repeat, then, that it is God, and God alone, whom parents and children must often and earnestly ask: Lord, what dost thou will my child to be? He is in thy hands, under thy guidance; thou alone art the Father of his soul; we leave the disposal of him to thee; lead and guide him to that state in which thou wishest him to serve thee! The necessary consequence, too, is that it is God alone from whom children especially must ask counsel, and for a long time, by frequent, earnest, and zealous prayer, and, prepared for everything, they must cry out with the apostle: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9 : 6.) Give to my understanding that light thou hast promised to those who ask it of thee, so that I may know how and where I am to live according to thy vocation and holy will! Oh, if all children acted thus with regard to their state of life; if all parents left their children to be thus disposed of by God, what a heavenly life would each one lead on earth, in the state appointed for him by God! How many souls would then go to heaven!

II. When the time comes for many young persons to choose a state of life, they are like ships with their sails set: they let themselves be driven in any direction, wherever the wind wills. They think not, reflect not. The first opportunity that offers

seems good and acceptable to them; it is a vocation for them. Their state may be either Religious or worldly, it may lead their souls to heaven or to hell. Some evening, in pleasant company, a young woman attracts the attention of a young man, an attachment begins, each party hopes that love is mutual. There is a favorable wind, let the ship go: I know what to do, I will get married. Thus in a moment the choice is made, the resolution fixed, in a matter on which the whole of one's after life, as well as eternity, depends. Whether that marriage so blindly contracted will have a good or bad effect on the soul's salvation, or will give good opportunities for saving one's soul—that question is never even dreamt of, much less is it maturely considered during waking moments, until the time comes when the state is chosen for life, and reflection is too late.

There are others who wish to act more prudently: they think and reflect for a long time beforehand and very carefully on the state of life they shall choose; but not with him whom they should consult first of all. They ask: What shall I be? But whom do they ask? Their parents, whose will and pleasure alone they want to know, or their relations or companions, whose advice and example they wish to follow. They never consult God, who alone knows the state of life suited to them, nor ask him for counsel. And what a miserable shipwreck will be the result! What useless repentance and profitless complaints will be sure to follow! What an unhappy, discontented, and wicked life, and what a miserable death must be the result!

Still it seems easier to excuse young people in this matter, on account of their want of experience. But should not the parents, at least, supply what is wanting in their children, by their care and instruction and experience? Should they not often exhort and compel them to have recourse to God, and to pray earnestly for light in such an important matter, and show them

how to pray? But, unfortunately, they are often wanting in this duty, in this parental obligation, so strictly enforced by God. Not only do they fail to exhort their children to recommend the matter to God, but they take the selection of a state for their children into their own hands, without taking any account of God. They settle the whole affair, and the poor children, thus predestined by their parents before they are grown up and able to judge for themselves, have to agree and to enter in the state pointed out for them by their father or mother, whether they like it or not, whether it is good or bad for them, whether it is their vocation or not.

We are not living in the days of Abraham, when the sacrifice of children by the hands of their parents was a rare and prodigious event! Nothing is commoner in the world in our days, than for parents to imitate Abraham: they joyfully sacrifice their children to God; they do not even wait for a command from on high to do so; they do it before God requires it of them; they sacrifice their children, although he has not asked for such a sacrifice and will not accept it. They sacrifice their children to God, not according to his counsel, nor for his service; but they force them on him, so to speak, with violence, in order to satisfy their own avarice, or evil inclinations, or for some other temporal motive. Abraham received exceeding great praise and an eternal reward for his ready obedience. But you, parents, what kind of a reward do you expect for the sacrifice you offer through self-will?

Christian parents, leave to their Creator alone the selection of a state for your children! I do not mean that you should give yourselves no trouble about it; that would be indeed a great mistake, and those who are careless of what becomes of their children must answer for their neglect, if they allow the latter to choose the first state that comes into their heads. No! It is your duty to help your children with advice and exhortation, and to assist them to the best of your ability to enter

on the state to which God has called them. Your duty is, if your child wishes to undertake anything rashly, to restrain him, until he has thought the matter over. Your duty is, if your child chooses a state in which there are evident dangers of evil, or if his motives are not good, or if he wishes to enter on it by unlawful means, to use your parental authority, and to prevent him, even against his will. The whole lesson that you have to learn from to-day's sermon is this: You must not determine on a state of life for your children without first deliberating maturely and taking counsel with God, and you must frequently exhort your children to do the same.

And you, children, to whom your vocation is of the greatest importance, remember the advice: "Pray to the Most High that he may direct thy way in truth" (Ecclus. 37 : 19). Think, and think often: What shall I be, a saint in heaven, or a reprobate in hell? Oh, certainly I ought not to hesitate. I must and will save my soul, no matter how the world may go with me; I will go to heaven. Even if I must leave my parents, I will go to heaven. Even if I must sacrifice all my goods and pleasures, I will go to heaven. I can do without my parents and friends for all eternity, but I cannot do without heaven. I can live poor and without sensual joys, but I cannot burn in hell forever! I am resolved, and firmly; I will go to heaven. Therefore I must not choose a state of life in order to grow rich, nor to enjoy life, but to go to heaven. Therefore I must and will choose that state which will most surely lead me to heaven. And what state is that? No other than that to which God calls me.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE COURSE TO BE ADOPTED BY THOSE WHO INTEND EMBRACING THE MARRIED STATE.

"*And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage.*"—John 2 : 2.

Happy people, who had the honor of having Jesus at their marriage feast! What a blessing must follow the presence of such a guest! All married people can have the same honor and happiness, if they only invite Jesus. He is willing to be present at every marriage, but he will not come uninvited. If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must be invited. If the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be really present at it. If the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must remain with the married couple during their lives. The subject being too extensive as to be treated of in one sermon, we shall consider only the first point:

"*If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must be invited to the wedding.*"

When one is invited by a stranger to dine, the invitation is not generally given on the day of the banquet, and much less when the meal is on the point of commencing. No; for such an invitation would be an insult, instead of an honor. Christian sons and daughters, if any of you here present intend entering the holy state of matrimony, is it not your wish to have a marriage feast? Without doubt you do. Do you not wish to have Jesus, your God, from whom all blessings must come, as your chief guest? You do not wish to exclude him from

your wedding? I am quite sure you do not. And when must the invitation be given? When the bridal-dress is ready, when you are about to go to church, or when the marriage feast is already prepared? Oh, no; he must be invited long beforehand.

What do I mean by this? As soon as the first thought of marriage comes, Jesus must be invited first of all, by frequent, constant, humble, and fervent prayer, and by the practise of virtue. He must be asked for light and grace to know if that is the state in which God wishes you to be; whether it is the state in which, according to his will, you can best serve him, and save your souls, which is your only business in this world. Jesus must be consulted to know whether the partner you have chosen is the one that he, in his inscrutable decrees, has determined for you from all eternity.

This prayer and deliberation with God is most necessary for all, in the choice of a state of life, no matter what it may be; because, generally speaking, our eternal happiness or misery depends thereon. It is true that one may save his soul in any state; but it is not true that each one may save his soul in every state; and it is an undoubted fact that one cannot save his soul in a state to which he is not called by God, unless with great difficulty. God, and God alone, knows what our state should be. He has reserved to himself the right of determining what state is the best for the spiritual welfare of each one of us. It is to God alone that men ought to appeal for guidance in this matter, and therefore his advice must be asked first of all.

If this is necessary in the choice of religious vocations, it is still more imperative in the choice of the married state, *on account of the many obligations* imposed on married people, which cannot be fulfilled without a special assistance from God; *on account of the many difficulties* of this state, which cannot be borne without a special grace from God; and *on account of the*

many dangers of this state, which cannot be overcome without the special help of God. Generally speaking, young people think that when their wedding day comes, they are about to enter into a paradise of joy and pleasure. Listen to what St. Paul says to you: "If thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned; nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh" (1 Cor. 7 : 28). For what is the married state, which is, in the Christian law, the indissoluble union of husband and wife, but a servitude, in which one party deliberately gives up all personal freedom for life to the other! Once the word is spoken, you have given yourself over to another till death, without knowing how he will behave to you in the future; you have given yourself to one who, before, had no right whatever over you, and who will now have an incontestable right over your person forever. You, by the marriage tie, have given up the right and authority you had over yourself to another person, to a stranger, who is in one mood to-day and in another to-morrow, and is as changeable as the moon in disposition, inclination, and bodily health. Him you are now bound to obey in many things, not always as you will, but as he wills. By the sacramental contract, you are always bound to obey the one person, as long as both of you live. If that person is exactly suited to your disposition, temperament, and inclination, and always remains so, that is indeed a great but rare happiness. You must certainly have taken counsel from God. But if, as frequently happens, the husband, after a time, begins to dislike his wife, or the wife her husband, what is then to be done? Ah, poor souls! there is no help for you; you are not less bound to each other on that account.

If you had only known that beforehand! But that could not be. What a great thing it would be, if there was a novitiate for the married life! There are many who would not wait to finish the year of trial, but would leave at the expiration of a

day or a month. But there can be no such thing; the final step must be taken at once; if things go well, so much the better; if not, it cannot be helped. Once the marriage knot is tied you belong to another, with whom you must live always; and no matter how bitterly you may afterwards repent the step you have taken, you cannot recall your words or free yourself. You have given yourself over to another, without knowing much about him, or his disposition. At first, when he was seeking your hand, he was all amiability, good-humor, and friendliness. You thought that you were about to wed an angel of modesty, mildness, and love. But afterwards, when the first love was somewhat cooled down, and you learned to know each other better in the daily intimacy of your lives, you may have found an obstinate, passionate, and jealous man, in him whom you first looked upon as so amiable; or a peevish, disagreeable, and headstrong woman in her whom you used to consider an angel of modesty and amiability. If that is the case, what are you to do? You did not think of that before, and now you must remain as you are, whether you like or not. There is no novitiate for you.

What a trial, what a martyrdom it is for married people to have to live together, when their dispositions, opinions, and habits are not suited to each other! When an intelligent, prudent, and quiet man has to live with a vain, conceited, and frivolous woman; or a modest, pious, and virtuous wife, with a wicked and quarrelsome husband; or a sparing, industrious, and diligent husband, who works day and night for his family, with a luxurious, indolent, and extravagant wife, who wastes her husband's hard-earned money in idleness, frivolity, amusements, and unnecessary luxury in dress! Would to God that such unhappy marriages were rare in the world! And if such a marriage has been contracted, what is to be done? Ah, poor souls, I repeat that you must bear your burden; the knot is tied, and cannot be loosed. Any vow made to God, even the

vows of Religion, may be dispensed with by the Catholic Church, when circumstances require; but not even the Church can interfere with the bond of marriage; there is no dispensation from that. Such is the command of Christ regarding marriage: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matth. 19 : 6). This bond seemed such a hard thing to the Apostles, that they all determined that it was better for a man to remain unmarried. Then his disciples said to him: "If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry" (Ibid. 10). Christ, foreseeing that the burden would be too great for the majority of them, said: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given" (Ibid. 11).

Why have I given such a long description of these trials? Is it to make married people sorry for having chosen that state, or to make single people loathe it? God forbid! The state is a holy one, and when one lives therein as becomes a Christian, it is a meritorious one; therefore I say with the apostle: "Let her marry to whom she will, only in the Lord." I wish every one of you happiness in that state. My only object in speaking to you of the difficulties of married life is to show you how necessary it is to have the grace of a special vocation to this state, and to pray for God's help to surmount its difficulties. Hence, I say, it is necessary to invite Jesus to the marriage feast a long time beforehand, to pray to him and seek counsel from him. Is it Jesus who advised you to marry? Is it Jesus who called you to that state of life? Is it after long and earnest prayer, and through divine inspiration, that you have chosen that person as your companion through life? Oh, if that is the case, be comforted! No matter how things may go with you, your marriage will be a happy one as far as your salvation is concerned. Divine Providence will always accompany you and arrange everything for the best, as long as you are not unfaithful to God. The grace of vocation will influence your words and actions and your whole conduct, so

that you can, little by little, overcome the bad temper of your husband or wife, and win his or her affections! The grace of vocation will lighten your burden, so that you can bear it; it will give you strength to overcome difficulties, and to bear patiently with crosses and trials, no matter how numerous they may be, and it will teach you to be resigned to the will of God, to heap up merits for your soul, and to gain a great reward in heaven.

But, alas! how few there are who look at the matter in this light! How few Christians, even, who invite Jesus a long time beforehand to their wedding! How few who first ask advice from God by prayer! They ask advice, but from whom? From their own animal appetites: Can I satisfy my inclinations in a lawful manner by marriage? Very well, then, I will marry; I need not deliberate any longer about it. They ask for advice from their outward senses: Is that young man or that young woman beautiful enough? If so, I require no more; I will marry. They ask advice, too, from the covetous and transitory world: Is that young man or woman rich and well off? Has he or she any hopes of inheriting property? Is that person of a high family? Can I, by such a marriage, obtain a high office or a good appointment? Such are the things people seek after. They ask advice from whom? From their parents, and rightly, too; but they must not ask their parents alone, nor first of all: "Houses and riches are given by parents," says the Wise Man, "but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord" (Prov. 19 : 14). Meanwhile, whatever their thoughts, desires, or deliberations may be, they seldom or never think of God beforehand; they concern themselves little about his will or vocation. Sometimes, indeed, they practise certain devotions to obtain happiness in the married state, but when? When the matter is already settled, and the engagement entered on. What wonder is it, then, that continual happiness in the married state is such a rare thing in

the world? What wonder is it that unhappy marriages are the rule? Unhappy is the marriage to which Jesus is not first invited!

Unmarried sons and daughters, to you especially do I address these words of warning, for you can still prevent future misery and useless repentance; think well before you undertake a matter on which principally depend your whole future life, your temporal happiness, the salvation of your soul, your eternity in heaven or in hell. Remember that your only business in this world is to serve God and to save your souls, and that you must therefore choose that state of life in which you will best be able, according to the divine will, to accomplish this one important business. But first of all, invite Jesus to assist you in your deliberation; ask him for advice, since he knows best what is most suited for your temporal and eternal welfare. Pray, and pray daily, to the Most High to show you in what state he wishes you to serve him and save your souls. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE DISPOSITIONS OF THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY.

"*Jesus saith to him: I will come.*"—Matt. 8 : 7.

The Centurion did not ask Christ to come to his house, since he thought himself unworthy of that honor, saying with the greatest reverence: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof." He merely represented briefly to our Lord the illness of his servant: "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented." And Jesus was ready at once: I will come. How much more ready will

he not be to go where he is invited and pressed to go, by humble and fervent prayer? My subject on last Sunday was, that if a marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be invited to it beforehand; long before any one intends embracing the married state, he must pray to God for light, and take counsel from him, to know if that is the state in which, according to the divine vocation, he can best attain his last end; and that, especially, on account of the many difficulties of this state, which cannot be overcome without special grace and help from God, Christians who are about to get married, if you invite Jesus in that way, I can assure you that he will say to you: "I will come." But it is not enough to invite Jesus beforehand, because—

Jesus himself must come to the marriage. And how is Jesus to come to the marriage? He must come to you

I. In a pure conscience;

II. In a pure intention;

III. In a pure love.

I. The Catholic Church, acting on the command of Christ, looks upon the marriage-tie, when once fully contracted, as holy and as utterly indissoluble in any and every circumstance, even though the happiness of the whole world depended on its dissolution. Matrimony is a sacred and holy bond, raised by Christ to the dignity of a Sacrament: "Remember," says St. Paul, "that marriage is honorable in all" (Hebr. 13 : 4). Look at it as you will, you will find it holy in all circumstances. Holy in its Founder, holy in its signification, as being a figure of the union and espousals of the divine Word with human nature, and of Christ with his Church, and of the Holy Ghost with the souls of the just. Holy in its matter, which consists of human bodies that are called, by the same Apostle, temples of the Holy Ghost. Holy in its effects, which are sanctifying grace, that is thereby increased in the soul, and actual grace,

by which married people are strengthened and helped to fulfil the duties of their state. Holy in its end, which is to multiply the children of God, and to bring them to eternal salvation. Holy as a Sacrament instituted by Christ, and indeed, as St. Paul says in praise of it, a great Sacrament: "This is a great Sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (Ephes. 5 : 32).

Hence Jesus must come to the marriage in the pure consciences of those who are about to get married. Holy things must be treated holily. You would not take a precious diamond and throw to the fowl on the dung-hill, nor a pearl and cast it before swine. Matrimony is a great and holy Sacrament, and therefore it must be received in the state of sanctifying grace; hence it would be a grievous sacrilege and a new sin to receive it with a conscience burdened by mortal sin. All Catholics know that it is a sacrilege to receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist without purity of conscience and the proper dispositions. This is no less true of all the Sacraments of the living. Is matrimony worthy of less respect and honor than the others? Is it not also instituted by Christ, the Saviour of the world? Has it not the same power, through the merits of his bitter Passion and death, to confer sanctifying grace, like the others? May not all that can be said in praise of the other Sacraments, also be said of matrimony?

But if I could see into the hearts and consciences of those who are preparing for this Sacrament, should I always find Jesus there? How many should I not see who are far away from Jesus, and who have invited the devil to occupy the principal place at their marriage feast? For, how is this holy Sacrament generally treated? How great the difference that we make in our imagination and judgment between this and the other Sacraments! For the latter, people prepare more or less carefully, as for a supernatural work, while the former is

looked upon as a mere natural and worldly business, the only sanctity of which consists in the ceremonies of the Church, the prayers that are read by the priest, and the blessing given by him. Thus, there is very little devotion, or reverence, or preparation of the soul for such a great Sacrament.

And how is that day sanctified, on which such a great, holy, and sacramental mystery is accomplished? Is Jesus present at every wedding? Can he be found in the midst of abuses and licentiousness that so often take place? Can he be found in the midst of impure pastimes and discourses; amid dancing and revelry; amid immoderate eating and drinking? Is there any real difference between such marriage feasts and the license of the carnival, which has come down to us from pagan times? I am filled with confusion when I think that the Jews in the Old Testament, when matrimony was not a sacrament, as it is now, put to shame the majority of Christians in this respect. We read in the eighth chapter of the Book of Tobias, that the younger Tobias, on the day of his marriage, said to Sara his bride: "Arise, and let us pray to God to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day: because for these three nights we are joined to God. . . . For we are children of the Saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God." "So they both arose, and prayed earnestly both together" (Tob. 8 : 4). It is not forbidden to be merry and rejoice, but Jesus must be present in the pure consciences of the merry-makers. The Scripture says of the marriage of Tobias: "They went to the feast;"—but in what manner—"but the marriage feast they celebrated also with the fear of the Lord" (Tob. 9 : 12).

Theologians teach that when a person receives the Sacrament of Matrimony in the state of mortal sin, he is guilty of a twofold irreverence, since he is the minister as well as the recipient of the Sacrament. The parish-priest, although he is present, and blesses the newly married couple, does as little toward the Sacrament of Matrimony as the two witnesses. He

is there only as the representative of the Church; the contracting parties alone administer the Sacrament to each other.

How can there be any blessing or happiness in such a marriage, from which Jesus is, so to say, driven away with contempt, in which the first step in the married life renews and increases enmity with God; in which the married couple, instead of receiving the sacramental grace that is so necessary for the fulfilment of the duties of their state, bring down upon themselves the curse of God?

II. The married state must be entered on with a pure intention. The younger Tobias prayed: "And now, Lord, thou knowest that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed forever and ever" (Tob. 8 : 9). So also prayed Sara, his wife: "Thou knowest, oh, Lord, that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust.... But a husband I consented to take, with thy fear, not with my lust" (Tob. 3 : 16, 18). Christians who are about to get married, there you see the end and object of the married life, and the pure intention you must have in entering on it. There are, indeed, other motives which are lawful and even meritorious. There are many who fear that, on account of their frailty, they will not be able to preserve holy purity amidst so many dangers, and who get married in order to avoid offending God. This end is not a bad one in itself. "But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: it is good for them if they so continue, even as I. But if they do not contain themselves, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7 : 8).

But the true end and object of the married state, which ought to be first in the intention of all Christians who are called to that state by God, must be the bringing up of children, and that, too, through a supernatural motive, that they may multiply souls who can know, love, and serve God; according to the

intention of Tobias: "In which thy name may be blessed forever and ever" (Tob. 8 : 9). Therefore, the Christian bride and bridegroom must thus resolve within themselves: I will serve my God as long as I live; for this end I am in the world; but I will not do that alone, I must have others with me to help me in the praise and service of my God, namely, my children, whom I will train and educate for that end, and thus by my zeal and diligence increase the glory and honor of God here on earth, even in the souls of others; if my children die in their infancy, after receiving a new birth in God, by Baptism, they will be made friends and co-heirs of Jesus Christ in the eternal joys of heaven, where they will bless God and pray for me; or if they live a long life, they will, after my death, serve God on earth. This is the proper end and object of the married state. This should be the intention of all pious married people, if they expect happiness and blessings.

How few are there who can truly say with Tobias: Lord, thou knowest, for thou canst see my heart, that I am not looking for any sensual gratification, but for the accomplishment of thy will according to my vocation, and for thy greater honor and glory? Therefore, all who are about to get married should follow the beautiful advice of the angel Raphael to Tobias: "Take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children," and with the intention of bringing them up for God and for heaven, "than for lust" (Tob. 6 : 17). And then Jesus will be present at the marriage, by purity of intention. Again, if the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be present at it by a pure love.

III. How few marriages there are at which Christ is thus present! When he first came into the world there was no place for him at any of the inns of Bethlehem. I am afraid that if he were to go about seeking admittance to marriages, he would find no room in very many of them! For what a multitude of sins often accompany the bride and bridegroom

to church, who thus enter the holy state of matrimony after having stained their virginal purity! How many marriages are not the actual result of unchastity? How often is it not the case that lost honor compels consent to marriage? Many go even so far as to think that a mere engagement is enough to make all things lawful to them. They keep company with each other, away from the eyes of their parents; they correspond, laugh and joke together, as if they were already married. The terrible day of divine justice will disclose a vast mass of sins which have been committed by thought, desire, and deed, and of which they who commit them take no account, because, they say, we are married in the sight of God. You will see that; and many parents, too, will learn what a fearful responsibility they incur by leaving their children alone with those whom they are about to marry, and by not preventing secret meetings and company keeping! They will learn, too, what a strict account they must render for having too long deferred without cause the marriage of their engaged children, and for having thus left the latter in the proximate occasion of sin. In a word, as far as impure love and pleasure is concerned, not a whit more is allowed to those who are merely engaged than to other unmarried persons.

You wonder sometimes why there are so many unhappy marriages. To tell the truth, I wonder that there are not more of them, which end most miserably in continual quarrelling and fighting, in jealousy and suspicions, excited by the infidelity of one or other of the parties, so that there is no rest day or night; in frequent losses sustained in business, and in losses caused by the death, sickness, infirmities, disobedience, and ill-conduct of children; in continual impatience, discontent, trouble, and despair at the trials incidental to the state; and that they thus end miserably in time and in eternity. Then the unfortunate people sigh and moan and bewail their lot, without help, or advice, or consolation,

or hope. But let them think for a moment how they entered on the married state, and how they lived before their marriage. Their sins are the torturers who now punish them.

The only consolation and advice that I can now give to you who have sinned in this way, is to make a virtue of necessity, to convert your present sufferings into eternal joys, and even to lighten your burden, if not to remove it altogether, when you have sufficiently atoned for your fault, by saying, with the penitent David, humbly confessing your sins and resigning yourselves to the will of God: "Thou art just, oh, Lord, and thy judgment is right" (Ps. 118 : 137). Christians, if you are sincere in this, you may be certain that he, of whom David says: "A contrite and humbled heart thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 1 : 19), although you have sinned against him, will not allow you to remain in your misery and suffering without consolation. If there are any who, having prepared the way for their marriage by sin, yet find things prospering with them, I cannot prophesy much good for them unless they truly repent, live more carefully, and fulfil the duties of their state exactly.

For you, single people, who think of getting married, the conclusion to be drawn from this instruction is evident enough. It rests with you now to profit by it. Bring Jesus to your wedding by purity of conscience and by preparing properly for such a holy Sacrament. Bring him with you by a pure intention, suited to the holy state of matrimony, and to insure his presence bring with you a pure and virginal love. Whenever you are assailed by an impure temptation, think to yourselves: Must I then give up all the happiness and blessings of my future state for a momentary pleasure? If you find yourselves in danger of sin, get married at once, so as to cut off the danger. If you are in those dispositions, I can assure you that Jesus will also say to you: "I will come," and bring with him the happiness and blessing which I wish you from my heart. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

MARRIED PEOPLE MUST BE IN THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD THAT THEY MAY NOT LOSE THEIR SOULS.

"*Lord, save us, we perish.*"—Matt. 8 : 25.

The disciples of Jesus were in great danger of losing their lives! The wind howled; the waves of the stormy sea rose mountains high; their little vessel was almost covered by the foaming billows. But what had they to fear? They had with them Jesus, who placed bounds to the sea, and gave the winds their power, whose least command both elements must obey at once. It is true that Jesus was asleep, but they had only to awaken him and ask him to help them, and they would be at once freed from all dangers, as was really the case; for they cried out: "Lord, save us, we perish! Then, rising up, he commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm" (Matt. 8 : 25, 26). Happy the man who has Jesus at his side, and God as his Friend and Helper! But woe to him who is in danger, without the grace and friendship of Jesus! To my mind, the married state is like a tempest-tossed vessel; but do not be afraid, you married people, who have Jesus at your side!

If the marriage is to be a happy one, especially as regards the salvation of the soul, Jesus must always remain with the married couple, even after their wedding.

No state in the world is so holy and perfect as not to have its special and manifold spiritual dangers and occasions of sin. In all places, at all times, snares are laid to entrap souls. The

solitude of a convent, even, is not free from them. Religious in their cells, hermits in the remotest forests, living in caves, although always engaged in prayer, meditation, fasting, and works of penance, yet had enough to do to combat the suggestions and temptations of the devil, and the desires of the flesh that all men are subject to, and to preserve their innocence unsullied. How many of them, wearied with the fight, gave way to their weakness, and allowed the enemy to overcome them! How often has not the Church of God, to her great sorrow, seen those who shone like stars in her firmament fall down in disgrace! Miserable mortals are we, indeed! Not one of us can boast of being certain of salvation. Wherever we are, as long as we live, we are exposed to countless dangers; wherever we are we require the special help and assistance of God; wherever we are we must always keep Jesus before our eyes, have him as our Friend, and cry out to him, humbly and fervently: "Lord, save us, we perish!"

Meanwhile, it is certain that the state of marriage is more dangerous in itself than other states. To have a true friendship and tender love for creatures, and at the same time to love God with all one's heart, soul, and strength; to be bound to work with all possible diligence for money and temporal goods, and still to preserve poverty of spirit and detachment from earthly things, these are the duties of which we might say, humanly speaking, that they run counter to each other and that they cannot be performed together. Nevertheless, you married people are obliged to perform them, or you will not be among the elect in heaven.

1. As far as purity of state is concerned, the married state is, in its own degree, a state of continence and chastity, as well as the state of celibacy and virginity, although not in such perfection as the latter; and even on this account it is much more dangerous, since it is more difficult to moderate and restrain ourselves when we are conceded a partial satisfaction for our

desires, and the occasion of them is always present, than when we keep away from such satisfaction altogether, look upon it as absolutely forbidden, and keep the occasion at a distance. There are many who can remain altogether continent in the unmarried state, more easily than they could use matrimony with due restraint. Not everything is allowed to you married people: there are many things which reason and conscience would make you reprove as vicious.

Of course the unmarried are exposed to the same danger, but it is not so great, nor so serious for them. Not so great, because we have less desire for that which we have no experience of, than for that to which we have become habituated; nor so serious, because if an unmarried person sins against purity in thought or in action, he commits but one mortal sin, unless there are other circumstances which increase his guilt; but a married person commits a twofold sin in such cases: one against purity and the other against conjugal fidelity; and if these sins are committed with other married people, even by an efficacious desire, then each time a threefold guilt is contracted: one against purity, and the other two against the conjugal rights of two individuals. Oh, Christian married people, keep God as your Friend always! Pray every day humbly, acknowledging your weakness, and with childlike confidence: "Lord, save us, we perish!"

2. In addition to this, there is another and a more common danger, and one more difficult to be overcome, which arises from the indissolubility of the marriage tie, and from the fact that married people must be always in each other's society. The effect of the bond of marriage should be such a perfect union of hearts, such a tender mutual love of the husband and wife for each other, that the one would be ready, if circumstances required it, to give up possessions, home, and property, and everything in the world, for the other's sake, and even to leave father and mother, brothers and sisters, according to the

express word of Jesus Christ: "A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife" (Matt. 19 : 5), and that he must do with a pure and true love. "Husbands, love your wives" (Ephes.), whom God has given you; wives, love the husbands to whom God has joined you; and the rule you have to follow is to love each other, "as Christ also loved the Church." That is to say, with a love that is true and constant even to the death of the Cross, that he endured for the Church. There, Christian married people, you have a pattern and example of the love that you must have for each other.

But do not forget that a very necessary and delicate distinction must be made here between this love and the love of God; for the union of your hearts must never interfere with your union and friendship with God, and you must hate and detest whatever is asked or required from you against the law of God. In this sense are to be understood the apparently harsh words of our Lord: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14 : 26). And how is that? Must a man hate his wife? Does not the Apostle, at the command of Christ, say that he must love her tenderly? Nay, are we not commanded to love even our worst enemy? "Can we love and hate the same person?" Yes, he answers, we must do both together. We must love that person as a friend and neighbor, but we must hate and avoid him as our worst enemy if we find him hindering us in the service of God. It is right for a wife to try with all diligence to please her husband, to obey him, to follow his advice, to adapt herself to his humor, and to do his will in all lawful things; she must do so, for it is her duty and obligation. But if he desires her to do anything unlawful, to take part in immodest conversation, or to frequent dangerous company, then she must use all her courage and strength to oppose and disobey him.

The married state is a most dangerous one, in many respects, unless Jesus is always at hand to help with his grace. This is what St. Paul alluded to when he wrote to the Corinthians about the happiness of the unmarried, who are not obliged to please men, and who can have God alone as their Friend: "And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. 7 : 34). And further: "He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God." On the contrary: "But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. . . . But she that is married, thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (1 Cor. 7 : 32-34). And still, both must retain the favor and grace of God. Both must strive to please God, as well as husband or wife; and there are hundreds of occasions on which it is impossible to please one, without displeasing the other. And that is a fruitful source of uneasiness and trouble. But the greatest danger and difficulty in this respect is that of displeasing God, for the sake of husband or wife.

Nothing has more power over us, for good or evil, than the example of those with whom we are in daily contact. "With the holy, thou wilt be holy; and with the innocent thou wilt be innocent. And with the elect, thou wilt be elect; and with the perverse, thou wilt be perverted" (Ps. 17 : 26, 27). How much more true is not that of the married state, in which two become one body and one heart? It is certainly true that a wife's virtue and piety can do much to make her husband pious, and that the holy example of a good husband can help the wife to practise virtue. But unfortunately, experience tends mostly in the contrary direction, and proves that we are more easily inclined to evil than to good, and that married people imitate each other's vices far more readily than they do each other's virtues.

If a young woman who has been piously brought up, and has preserved her baptismal innocence, was a weekly communicant, and was much given to prayer, meditation, and mortification, marries a man who is totally different from her as far as piety is concerned, and who is given to pride, vanity, idleness, and all sorts of vices, who seeks for nothing but sensual gratifications, and who follows all the customs of the world in his conversations and amusements; she is like an innocent lamb that is given over to a ravening wolf! What a temptation is there for a pious soul! She requires a powerful grace and help from God to preserve her innocence, piety, and tender love of God under such circumstances. For, without that help, she would soon experience a complete change in herself: the spirit of piety, which she brought to her marriage, would grow cold little by little; she would lose her taste for spiritual things, and, following her husband's example, which she has constantly before her, she would lead an idle, vain, careless, and unchristian life.

It would seem as if men were in little danger of being led away and perverted by the bad example of their wives, because they are the masters and heads of their families, and besides, they have more courage and strength of mind to avoid the effects of bad example. But is that really the case? Adam in Paradise had all his inclinations under the full control of reason, and yet he was weak enough to give way to the solicitation of his wife; a word of Eve's was enough to cajole and betray him, so that, to his own ruin and that of his posterity, he transgressed the divine command. Solomon was the wisest of all men, but he allowed women to befool him to such an extent, that he turned his back on the true God and bent the knee before idols. A bad and unchristian woman is worse in a house than a wicked man, and, generally speaking, pious men are more frequently perverted by their wives than pious wives are by their husbands. A wicked woman can easier destroy

the virtues of her husband, than a pious man can reform a wicked wife. In a word, both are in danger of sinning grievously for each other's sake. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary always to have Jesus as a Friend and Helper, if the soul's salvation is to be secured.

You who think of getting married should learn from this how careful you must be in selecting the person with whom you intend to pass your lives. Do not consider, first of all, as most people do, whether that person is rich or beautiful, or of a good family, or experienced in the world; your first question should be, is that person pious, virtuous, and well brought up; and whether by living with that person you can serve God, save your soul, and gain heaven without difficulty. But to find one of this kind, you must pray to God for help, for a good and prudent wife is a special gift of God. To deserve that gift, you must lead a virtuous life. "A good wife is a good portion" (Prov. 19 : 14). And to whom is that portion given? "She shall be given in the portion of them that fear God, to a man for his good deeds" (Ecclus. 26 : 3).

3. The third danger arises from the cares of housekeeping and providing for children. Who does not know how difficult it is to work hard for money and temporal goods, and still to remain poor in spirit, and to fulfil those two duties without exceeding in either? If you married people neglect your housekeeping, and do not work with all possible diligence to feed your children and educate them according to your condition, you will be held responsible for your negligence and will be punished for it. And if you allow yourselves to be too much taken up with worldly things, for your children's sake, you will fall a prey to the devil and will lose your souls, according to the words of St. Paul: "They that will become rich, fall into the snare of the devil" (Tim. 6 : 9). It is not allowed for you who are in the married state, as it is for other unmarried persons, to follow the counsel that Jesus Christ gave to the young man

who wanted to know what he must do to gain heaven: "Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor....and follow me" (Matt. 19 : 21). No, that perfection is not for you; if you have temporal goods, you must keep them, you must look after them carefully, and increase them by just means; but in the care, possession, and increasing of money and property, you must not allow your hearts to be attached to them. Hear what the Apostle says of this: "This, therefore, I say, brethren: It remaineth, that they also who have wives, be as if they had none." They must keep their hearts and minds as free as if they were completely their own masters. "And they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not" (1 Cor. 7 : 29-31). And why? Because the care that you can and must have for worldly goods does not dispense you altogether, nor except you from the general law of Christ: "Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14 : 33).

This is law for all, without exception: "*Every one of you.*" It was not for the Apostles alone that it was made, but for the crowd of people of all sorts who were following our Lord. "For there went great multitudes with him, and turning, he said to them: Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple." But we must not understand that of the real leaving of all worldly goods, for otherwise every one would be really poor; but of the inward detachment of the heart and will; namely, that each one who possesses or works for earthly goods, must be as ready and willing to lose them, if it pleases God, as to keep and increase them.

Ah, you think, if that is really the case with us, how is it possible for us to save our souls? I give you the same answer that Jesus himself gave to a similar question that his disciples put to him, when he said that it is exceedingly difficult for a rich man to enter heaven. They asked, in consternation: "Who then can be saved? With men this is impossible; but

with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19 : 25). For those who enter the married state without being called to it by God, or who consider temporal things alone, or who think seldom of God, go rarely to Church, who seldom receive the Sacraments, and do not concern themselves about having God as their Friend, for such as these it is difficult to escape the dangers that threaten their salvation; but for pious Christians who are zealous in the service of God, and who often ask him for help and assistance, it is quite possible, nay, even easy. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Tobias, Job, and many others in the Old Testament, as well as numbers in the New Law, were married; they had to provide for their families; they had riches and worldly goods in abundance; and yet they conquered the dangers of their state, and became great Saints in heaven. In our days, too, there are many Christian married people who lead upright, pious, and holy lives. The more numerous and the greater the dangers of a state are, the more frequent and powerful are the helps that God gives to men, so that the dangers may be easily overcome; but he gives these helps only to his friends, who strive to please him.

Therefore I again conclude that if the marriage is to be a happy one, as far as the soul's salvation is concerned, Jesus must be with you continually, even after the wedding. And woe to you, married people, if Jesus abandons you, or ceases to be your Friend, or leaves you to your own unaided powers! Therefore, whatever cares you may have, whatever you do, or undertake, see first that you keep God before your eyes, and that he is your Friend; do not lose his grace and favor by mortal sin, nor make yourselves unworthy of his help and assistance by a vain and tepid life! One mortal sin would open the door to many sins, and often to eternal ruin, for it would deprive you of the friendship of God, and leave you without his help in so many dangers. Call upon the Lord by a frequent reception of the Sacraments, and by living in the constant love and

fear of God. Call upon him as the disciples did, when they were in danger of death, saying: "Lord, save us, we perish!" and so use the goods of this life that you may not lose eternal goods.

And God will certainly keep the promise he so often made: "Ask and you shall receive." He abandons no one who does not first abandon him; he will command the stormy winds to be still, and will direct everything for your greater advantage and merit. Is God your Friend and Helper? oh, then be comforted! Then you may well say with David: "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me" (Ps. 22 : 4). Amen. Amen.

Fifth Sunday After Epiphany.

THE NECESSITY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD IN THE MARRIED STATE IN ORDER TO HAVE TEMPORAL HAPPINESS.

"*The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field.*"—Matt. 13 : 24.

What a pity! What useless and vexations labor it is for a man to scatter the seed and reap no profit from it, but to have an enemy come during the night and to oversow cockle? How much unprofitable labor of this kind do we not undertake! And yet most of our labor is in vain because we do not understand nor attend sufficiently to the words of St. Paul: "I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase. Therefore, neither he that planteth is anything, nor her that watereth: but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3 : 6, 7). If God

does not help us in our business, if his influence and assistance are wanting to us, all our labor is in vain. And what wonder is it that we do not always prosper? I have proved that for a marriage to be happy, as far as the soul's salvation is concerned, the married couple must always have God as their Friend; now I have to show that

For a marriage to be happy, even as far as temporal happiness and prosperity in business are concerned, the married couple must always have God as their Friend.

What is the object of temporal business in the world, especially in the married state? It is to keep the wealth that one has, to increase it by gaining what one has not, in order to clothe, feed and educate one's family, children, and one's self decently, and to preserve a good name before men. That is a laudable object, and when it is directed to our last end, in accordance with the divine will, it is meritorious of eternal life. To gain that object, men use different means: some make use of their trade or profession, others are merchants and shopkeepers, others employ their learning in legal matters, others are farmers, others lend their money at interest, others go to law to preserve their property, or to replace what they have lost; in a word, every one works as well as he can to live and keep his family according to his state in life. But for the office, the trade, the shop, the farm, or the lawsuit to turn out successfully, what an amount of things are required! Good sense and understanding, bodily health and strength must form the foundation of the building, and these are exposed to many dangers and accidents: the influence of the heavenly bodies, the changes of worldly usages, the rise and fall of the market, heat and cold, noxious insects, and a host of other things can injure or benefit our business, and they do not at all depend on our free will. To speak only of our fellow men, we very often are in want of their advice, favor, or friendship; we require

their help in business; sometimes we must try to prevent them from injuring us; in a word, we have a thousand things to take into account, to foresee, to weigh, to guard against, to fear, to love, to use, and to reject; if we make a mistake in any one of them, our business is ruined.

Suppose, now, that a man has all these things prepared and arranged according to his wish; what is to be done then? Has he done enough for his business to prosper? By no means; he has, so to say, nothing but the sand, lime, and stone, the mere materials and tools for the work. In addition to these, he must have an infinite wisdom to plan out the edifice, an infinite power to work at it, under the direction of infinite wisdom, if his employment, trade, business, or lawsuit is to begin, continue, and end prosperously. The chief Architect is still required: I mean the great God, the Lord and Master, who rules and directs all creatures. Without *his consent*, no creature can be used in the service of man; nothing will make the least movement for our advantage, until it gets the command of its Creator to do so. Without *his will*, no man, nor any other creature, can either do good or harm; without *his help* and assistance all our cares and plans, all our foresight, labor, and trouble, and all the friendship and favor of others, cannot be of the least use to us. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Ps. 126 : 1). David speaks here, not only of a material house of wood and stone, but rather of that which constitutes good housekeeping, namely, the temporal prosperity, happiness, and good fortune of the family. You may labor and toil for this, day and night; you may strain your mind as much as you please; you may call on all men for help; if the Lord is not favorable to you, your labor is in vain: "It is in vain for you to rise before light" (Ps. 126 : 2), to seek your profit; unless the Lord helps you, and blesses your undertaking, you may plague yourself to death before you advance a foot toward prosperity.

But why should I say all this to Christians? Their faith teaches them that nothing can happen in the world, except sin alone, without the permission of God. "The prosperity of man is in the hand of God" (Ecclus. 10 : 5). "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God" (Ecclus. 11 : 14). Can there be any greater folly than that which most men are guilty of, who, in their undertakings, trust solely to their own cleverness, cunning, prudence, industry, and labor, and never ask help from God, as if they stood in no need of him? Who ever thinks of being reconciled with God, if he is in the state of sin, or of praying to God for help, before undertaking an important business? How many are there not in the world who try to succeed in business by means that are directly against God and his commandments, and who hope to secure prosperity by offending and insulting him! Adam in Paradise thought that by disobedience he could exalt himself and make himself like to God; and that very disobedience was the cause of unhappiness to him and his descendants. Joseph was sold by his brethren and sent to Egypt as a slave, because they feared that he would one day rule over them, and by that very means they made Joseph their ruler, and were compelled afterwards to bow down, trembling, before him. King Pharao wished to destroy the Israelites by hard treatment, fearing that they would grow too powerful for him: he oppressed them in all kinds of ways, but what was the result? The more he oppressed them, the more they increased, and Pharao himself and his people found temporal and eternal death in the Red Sea when pursuing them. Saul sought to kill David, so as to preserve the crown in his own family, but all his plans and schemes resulted only in giving David more influence among the people and in placing him sooner on the throne. The Jews, wonderful to say, thought that they would lose their city of Jerusalem and their temple if they did not put Jesus to death; and that very crime brought upon them the evil they dreaded.

There is no wisdom, no prudence, no counsel against God, no prosperity nor happiness without God!

Such, too, is the daily experience of the world. How many are there not who labor night and day, form all kinds of plans and schemes, spare no effort and even deny themselves the proper time for meals, in their eagerness to push on the work, and yet their labor is wasted, and they know not why. The cause is generally sought for in the change of fortune, or in the opposition and envy of man. They exclaim, as in the Gospel of to-day: "An enemy hath done this," or they attribute it to unfavorable weather, bad seasons. Certainly these things are the immediate instruments by which their prosperity is hindered, and temporal loss is entailed upon them, but who is the Master who has set these instruments in motion? How do matters stand between you and God? Are you in his friendship? or have you treated him with carelessness, and banished him out of your hearts? If so, what wonder is it that your business does not prosper? Do you wish, Christian married people, and all of you, according to your different states, to perform your worldly business prudently, so as to profit by it? Then, first of all, you must be in the favor and grace of God. Do not be so foolish as to think that he who has lost God, the Supreme Good, can gain anything thereby. What profit or advantage can he hope for from all his labor and trouble, as long as he has such a powerful enemy against him, as long as he is hated by him from whom all blessings must come? Therefore, never begin an important business without first making sure of having God on your side. Whatever you are about to do, first of all take counsel with God, and if your conscience reproaches you with anything, go to confession and tell your sins; trust no one, fear all, until you are as certain as you can be that you are in the grace of God, and that you can count upon his help and assistance. If you do that you will have accomplished the most important part of your business, and

may confidently make use of all lawful means to finish it, in such a way, however, that you do not trust to them so much as to God. They must be used as instruments or tools which might serve to destroy as well as to build up. The Supreme Architect must arrange everything, if any advantage is to be derived. If he keeps away from the work, then you have only built upon sand, and your labor is in vain.

Yes, if only the tenth part of all your labor and trouble and planning were thus directed to God, how much more successful would you not be! We think, sometimes, day and night upon some matter of business; that is right and necessary; but if we devoted but half an hour of the time to prayer, or to hearing Mass, that prayer and Mass, although they have apparently little to do with our business, would certainly help more to success than all our wearisome thinking. Very often you are obliged to seek friends and patrons to help you, and speak for you; do so, in God's name; it cannot be helped; but do not forget to gain over to your side the Saints in heaven, the Blessed Virgin, and your angel guardian. They will speak to God for you, and he is able to make those men, whose help you think you require, inclined to assist you. In order to gain friends and patrons, you must make several visits, and offer them a most respectful attention. Do not forget also to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and you will find that the visits you pay to men will have more fruit. You must, sometimes, in order to gain your end, give presents here and there; that also you may do, as long as you are not giving against the law of God; but you should try also to bribe Christ our Lord; give something to the poor and suffering, in whose persons Jesus comes to your door; make some offering for the Poor Souls in Purgatory; such presents will be of greater help to you than any others. In a word, keep in the friendship of God, and say confidently with David: "My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 120 : 2).

I will conclude my sermon with an interesting story in proof of this, and give it in the very words of the person concerned: "My father," so the story commences, "who was rich in wealth as he was generous toward the poor, showed me once his whole stock of ready money, and said to me: 'My son, tell me truly what you think, which would you rather have me do—leave you all this money, as it is for your inheritance, or give it in trust for you to Jesus Christ?' 'Oh, father,' I answered, 'no one is to be preferred to Christ; I would rather have him, for I might lose the money, but Christ will be my constant, true, and eternal Friend.' My father then gave almost all the money to the poor, and left me but a small sum at his death; so that poverty itself has taught me to place my greatest hopes in Jesus Christ as my Guardian; and I have not been deceived. For, amongst the most respectable citizens, there was one who had a very virtuous wife and an only daughter; the mother said one day to her husband: 'We have an only daughter, and are very rich; what sort of a husband shall we seek for her? If she marries a rich man who is not a man of sense and honor, she will have a miserable and unhappy life; let us rather seek for a pious, modest young man, who will love her for her own sake, and not for her money.' 'You are right,' said the husband; 'if our daughter marries one as rich as she is herself, they will both wish to become great people, and will get too proud and haughty, and if her husband is richer than she, he will lord it over her, and she will be his servant; the best thing we can do is to select a good and virtuous husband for her, although he may not have much of the world's wealth. Above all, we must ask God to help us to find one of that kind. Do you go to church early in the morning, and ask God for light and help to this end; perhaps the first person you will see coming into the church will be the man we are looking for; because it is a good sign of piety to see one going early to church.' The wife obeyed, and while she was praying, I entered the church before

any one else. I was immediately asked all about my family, training, and character. I told everything candidly; how my father was a rich man who, with my consent, had made himself poor through charity, and had left me Christ as my Guardian. On hearing this they thanked divine Providence, and gave me their daughter to wife with a rich dowry." All you married people, and you who intend to marry, should learn from this what should be your first care in selecting a partner for life, namely, to see whether the object of your choice is pious and virtuous; and also that piety is the best dowry. Learn, too, to be careful in training your children to virtue and piety. You will do very well, indeed, for your children, if you leave them the fear of God as their inheritance, and Jesus Christ as their Guardian. And finally, learn all of you what I wished to prove, namely, that the fear and love of God are the surest way even to temporal prosperity. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE ALL-WISE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN ARRANGING DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE.

"*I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.*"—Matt. 13 : 35.

There are many great and hidden mysteries which we in vain try to unravel with our weak intellects, and which we should never know anything about, unless the Lord himself declared them to us. Nor do I speak now of divine mysteries, such as the Trinity and Unity of God, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Real Presence of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine. Amongst the natural events that

daily occur before our eyes there is one that puzzles most men, as if it were an incomprehensible mystery; nay, sometimes it makes them murmur and complain and dissatisfied with their state. They ask: Why has God made the states and conditions of men so different? Is he not the Father of his great household? Are we not all his children, and alike according to nature? How comes it, then, that we are treated so differently; that one gets more, another less; that one is in a high, another in a lowly position; that one can live in idleness and comfort, while another must live in poverty and hard work; that one is rich, another poor? To answer these complaints, I will show that all these things are perfectly just, right, and consistent, and for our greater good.

I. God has arranged all things for our greater good in general;

II. For the greater good of each one in particular.

I. Amongst other wonderful things that God has created is the human body. The head occupies the principal place, and is the council-chamber in which the reason weighs everything, and directs the other members. The eyes are placed just below the forehead to see; the ears are on both sides of the head to hear; the arms and hands can be stretched out much farther that they may work, and help the other members; the feet are placed underneath to bear the body from one place to another; the teeth are placed in the mouth to masticate the food; the stomach is placed in the centre of the body to digest the food; the heart is so placed that it can send the blood through all the veins. Each member has its own duty to perform, and differs from all the others in form and appearance.

That difference of the members is necessary to the stature and support of the body, that one may be able to help the other, and that all may concur in preserving themselves in their

proper position. Without that order, difference and concurrence, the whole body would be destroyed. Suppose, now, that all the members were independent, and that they began to murmur amongst themselves and to complain of their position and duty. The feet complain of the load they have to carry, and would wish to be higher up and see like the eyes; the hands grow tired of working and wish to digest like the stomach, or else refuse to supply it with food. What would become of the body in that case? Try it for a few weeks: let the hands lie idle and give no food to the stomach, and see how it will be with you. Hands, feet, and stomach must die of hunger.

The same difference is necessary in all states of life to support man. We constitute a body, as St. Paul says: "We being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members one of another: having gifts different according to the grace that is given us" (Rom. 12 : 5, 6). Experience proves that one cannot exist, or can do so only for a very short time, without the help of another of different condition; so miserable is man when he is alone. We live in society, and by society our lives are preserved. Let us consider merely those things that we require for our daily support. We must at least have bread to eat; but how are we to get it? The ground has to be tilled, the corn must be sown; there must be some one to do that, and to provide enough for millions of people; they who do it are laborers or agriculturists. Many different implements are necessary to till the land properly—ploughs, for instance, and smiths are required to make them. The corn must be ground after being threshed, the meal must be made into dough, and baked in an oven; therefore, there must be millers and bakers. See how many different occupations are necessary to supply us with bread alone! We require clothes, and where are we to get them? We must have wool, that has to be first shorn from the sheep, then cleaned, carded, spun, woven, pressed, cut and shaped to the size of the body. Who will do all that?

The head and feet must also be covered; so that hats and stockings and shoes are wanted. Who will provide us with all those things? You see, therefore, that weavers, dyers, hatters, shoemakers, and tailors are required. We must have houses to live in, to protect us from the rain and snow and cold air; different articles of food must be brought from one country to another, because everything cannot grow in the one place; therefore, there must be builders, sailors, and drivers. Arms, offensive and defensive, are necessary to keep off the attacks of enemies; the liberal arts and sciences must be taught and learned, that the country may be governed properly; and the same may be said of countless other usages, occupations, and employments that require people of different trades and arts, without which human society could not exist.

Where are you now, you uneasy people, who are dissatisfied with your lot in life? Let us again hear your complaints and murmurs, your wishes and desires. Oh, what a difference there is between people in this world! Why must I work hard for my daily bread, while others have only to sit down and it is brought to them? Why am I so poor that I must beg for food? Could not God give me money and property, as he has given to others? Why am I a servant, while others are masters and mistresses? Why am I always in trouble, while others have nothing to annoy them? Would that I had never entered on this state! Would that I had never known the person who now torments me so! If I had only become a priest! If I had only remained in the world! I wish I was this! I wish I was that! All very well; but what does it all mean? Do you wish that all men should be equal? That one should be as rich, as honored, as clever, as learned as another; that one should have as many comforts as another; in a word, that there should be perfect equality of states and conditions of life? But if every one were placed in the condition in which he desires to be, would people be satisfied then? I do not think so; for

their imaginations would then suggest something else to be desired.

Suppose that we are all equal, as we wish to be; what is the consequence? What a state of things there would be then! How many years, nay, how many months or weeks do you think the world could last under such circumstances? Who would till the ground, or reap the corn? Who would thresh, and bake bread? Who would cut wood and stone to build houses? Who would make hats, shoes, stockings, and clothes? Who would be a servant? But, you think, I would be rich enough, I could have everything for money, and might employ people to do all that for me. What people? Other people, you say, who wish to earn money. But they are as well off as you, and no doubt they will study their own comfort, too. Do you think that if I am not in want of you, I am likely to attend on you, or to work for you? If I am as great and as rich as you, what do I care for your money? And again, if you expect others to work for you while you remain idle, what becomes of the equality you are so anxious for? See what confusion you would cause if you had your way. Every one would know all the trades and professions, and every one would be master, and have to wait on himself; every one would be a ruler, and at the same time a baker, a mason, a shoemaker, and a tailor. In a word, every one would be wretched with that imaginary happiness, and the world would soon go to ruin.

Acknowledge, therefore, that such a wish would be wrong and foolish, and that it would be of no service to the welfare and preservation of the human race, while the manifold differences and distinctions that exist amongst men are absolutely necessary. Learn from this to admire the wisdom and foresight of our heavenly Father, who bestows his gifts in unequal measure, but so that all are benefited by them. To one he has given much, to another little, and to a third hardly anything (1 Cor. 7 : 7); so that one being subordinate to another,

they may be mutually dependent on and helpful to one another. The rich and the poor are two different kinds of men, who cannot do without each other. If there were no rich people, the poor could not live. If there were no poor, the rich would have no one to work for them. The servant depends on his master for his support; the master depends on his servant for the work he expects him to do. And there is no one, no matter how poor and lowly he may be, who cannot sometimes be of assistance and help even to the greatest lord of the land. We learn that from the fable of the mouse and the lion. The mouse had received a kindness from the lion, and out of gratitude promised to help him on the first opportunity. The haughty lion laughed at the idea of a little mouse ever being able to help him. But not long after he was caught in the hunter's toils; he foamed with rage and threw himself from side to side in his efforts to get free, but the more he tried, the tighter became the ropes that bound him, so that, believing himself on the point of being made a prisoner, he commenced to howl and lament bitterly. The mouse hearing the noise, ran up, and seeing what the matter was, commenced gnawing at the ropes until they were all loosed. The lion was thus set at liberty, and he doubted no longer that a poor little animal could render him a great service. This fable shows that even the lowest, poorest, and most despicable of men can be sometimes useful and even necessary to the service and support of the richest and greatest, and therefore should not be despised.

Yes, some will think, it is easy for you to talk; I know that there is a necessity for having different stations in life, but why is mine such a lowly one? Why am I so unfortunate as to be obliged to live in poverty, hard work, and trouble of all kinds, although we are all alike as far as our nature is concerned? How could it injure the general welfare if I were in a better and more comfortable position, and if I, who am to-day so poor, were to become rich to-morrow; if I, who have now so

much labor, care, and anxiety, were enabled to live henceforth in peace and quiet? Now, you make out a very good case indeed; but you think only of yourself in the matter; how would it be if every one were like you in that respect? It would be the case of equality over again, for you have no more right to those things than others, nor can you bribe the Almighty God to pay more attention to your fancied claims than to those of others. Be careful, then, that while you wish to be better off than others, you may not become the most miserable of all; and while you have to remain in your poor and lowly condition, since God will not change, on your account, the order he has established, you do not make that condition far worse by your impatience and discontent. You are in a lowly condition, because God has decreed so for you, and not for others. But why for you? That is a question you must ask God himself, if you dare do so. I admit that others are better off than you; one is rich, another is a great man; and they have as little claim as you to a better position, on account of their merit before God; but as the matter stands, it is in accordance with the divine will; the will and decree of God are the sufficient reason for it. But, that I may give you a more consoling answer to your question: Why has God placed you in that state, and given you, as you think, such an unhappy lot in life, I tell you that that very state, no matter what it is, has been given to you by God for your own greater good, and the same is true of every one; so that all should rejoice and be comforted in their state. That is what I shall prove just now.

II. Our eternal salvation or our eternal ruin depends on a certain state of life and on certain circumstances of it; so that he who will save his soul in one state, would lose it in another. Besides, God does not wish all men to serve him in the same manner. Our great King wishes to have different kinds of servants and ministers in his court. He requires one kind of

service from married people, who have to look after their families and to bring up their children to serve him; another from the unmarried, the sick, the rich, the poor. Therefore, it is certain that God does not lead all men to heaven in the one way, but in as many different ways as there are different states, obligations and duties; so that he wishes one to save his soul in one way, and another in a different way. And we must be very careful to remember that our salvation does not depend on the holiness and excellence of a state, nor on the occupations of a state in themselves, but on the conformity of the state and its occupations with the will and decree of God, who has appointed it for us from all eternity by his all-wise providence. Finally, there is no doubt that God, who takes care of the sparrows of the air and of the smallest worm of the earth, takes care also of our eternal salvation; for his wish and desire is our sanctification (1 Thess. 4 : 3); he wishes that all men, for whom he has shed his Blood, should save their souls. Nor can it be doubted, I repeat, that by his decree, he has placed us in that state, in those circumstances, in which we can best and easiest serve him according to his intention, and thus work out our salvation and gain eternal happiness, if we only really wish it.

We are then forced to conclude, when we consider all this, that no state, no circumstances in the world could be better for us than that in which we now are by divine decree. For what better thing could we desire than to be in that place, in that way, in which we can best serve God as he wishes us to serve him, and work out our salvation with the greatest facility, since it is the state that he has selected as the means of leading us to eternal happiness? What better would we be if we had the most holy or most excellent state, if we were not in it according to the will of God? Of what use would the whole world be to us, with all its riches, honors, and pleasures, if we do not go to heaven? Therefore, we must live contentedly and peacefully in the state appointed for us by God, and, no matter

what it is, we must thank him for having placed us therein. For otherwise, we poor mortals must understand better than the Almighty what is most useful for ourselves; or else we are blind in what concerns our souls; or we doubt divine Providence, as if it did not concern itself about our eternal welfare. Any of these thoughts would be blasphemous in the highest degree.

Learn from this how wrongly you act when you complain of your state, and how foolish they are, who, wishing to lead good and Christian lives, disturb and disquiet themselves on account of their piety and their wish to do good and save their souls. If I were rich, says the poor man, I could do more good, go more regularly to church, and practise the works of Christian charity and mercy better; as it is, I must remain at home and work for my living. Ah, unfortunate people that we are! says the married woman, when she now and then visits a convent, or sees some one who can spend her time quietly praying at home—the whole day I am busied with my children and with a thousand household cares; I wish I had become a nun, or had remained unmarried; then I could attend to my soul better, serve God with more zeal, and be more sure of going to heaven. All these are nonsensical complaints. Do what God requires of you in the state in which he has placed you, as well as you can, with a good and supernatural intention for his sake, and be content in that state, and while performing its duties, with God and with yourself. Then you will be truly pious, you will serve God as he wishes you to serve him, and you will work out your salvation according to your state, so that you will be on the right road to heaven.

If you were all to live thus content with your position, according to the will of God, what an agreeable heaven this earth would soon become! What happy and fortunate times the years would bring about with them! I wish you that happiness with all my heart. Serve God as he wishes you to do in

your different states. You are enough for God, let God be enough for you. If God is satisfied with your person, your state, and your occupation, do you also be satisfied with his decree. If a man lives as God wishes him to live, and has God as his Friend, what more does he want? He certainly should have enough. I conclude with the words of St. Paul: "And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4 : 7), until we are called away from the state in which God has placed us, to meet together in that happy state, in which there will be eternal peace, contentment, and joy. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE HAPPINESS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.

"*Go you also into my vineyard.*"—Matt. 20 : 7.

The householder is God; the vineyard, the true Church; in which all men are called to labor during their lives, that when their task is done in the evening, that is, after their death, they may receive an eternal reward in heaven. Now, as we see in to-day's Gospel that the work is unequally divided, the first laborers having the longer and more difficult part to perform, the last the shorter and easier, so also God requires different services from men, according to the different states of life which he has appointed in his Church. He requires one thing from a Religious, another from a layman, another from a single man, another from a married man. Each one must work and serve God according to his state, in order receive a reward in heaven. All states are holy, and are means of gaining heaven. To

whichever of these God calls you, go and work in the vineyard of the Lord according to your state. That you may know something of what you have to select, I shall give you a slight sketch of them, beginning to-day with the Religious state. I say: *In the Religious state, when one lives according to it, he finds a happiness, than which there is none greater on earth.*

A real happiness awaits those who are called by God to the Religious state, and who live according to its rules. A happiness which blind worldlings, who measure everything by their senses, cannot appreciate. A happiness that is not derived from creatures, but from the Creator himself, and which resembles the great happiness of the Angels and Saints in heaven. In what does the happiness of the Blessed in heaven consist? It consists in three things:

I. In the eternal contemplation of God;

II. In the eternal love of God, and

III. In the eternal joy that comes from this contemplation and love.

I. With regard to the first thing, the constant intercourse with God, walking always in his presence, never leaving him out of the thoughts, that is an easy matter, nay, almost one of necessity, for every Religious. All that is left outside the convent, and all that is found in it, helps and even compels the Religious to this with a kind of gentle violence. It is an unusual thing for a layman to think often of God during the day, for his attention is distracted by a thousand other thoughts, so that it is next to impossible for him to think deeply of God and heavenly things. If God sometimes speaks to him inwardly by inspiration, there comes a swarm of worldly and domestic cares about the children, the servants, clothing, food, and a host of troubles connected with his business, which, like

a gloomy cloud, darken the light and take God away from his sight. But, tell me, of what could a Religious think, if not of God and heavenly things? He has by his vows renounced all worldly care; by chastity, all care for his body; by obedience, all care for his own will; by poverty, all care for money and wealth, so that he can neither lose nor gain by such things, nor can a thief break into his cell and rob him. It is nothing to him whether bread is cheap or dear, where the stuff for his habit is bought, and whether it costs much or little; what he eats or drinks, and a hundred other things of the kind are matters of imperfect indifference to him. What can and must he then occupy himself with? It is a difficult thing to think of many things at the same time, and to think of nothing at all is impossible for a human being who has the use of reason. Our minds must be always occupied with something, either with God and heavenly things, or with the world and temporal things, or with ourselves and our bodily wants. Now, a good Religious, who has made his profession, has no more business to think of the world, or of his own bodily wants, and so it follows as a matter of course, that he is compelled to think of God.

Again, almost everything that one sees and hears in the bustling world, hinders communion with God; the eyes and ears should be kept constantly closed, if the thoughts are to be always turned to God. On the other hand, almost everything that one sees and hears in a well-ordered convent, helps to the recollection and remembrance of God; the eyes and ears should be kept constantly closed, if one does not wish to think at all of God. The religious habit, the general silence, the rules of the Order, the pious pictures that are hung up in all the rooms and corridors, the modesty, zeal, and good example of the brethren, or of the sisters, all these things raise the mind to God. All the duties that are performed according to the daily rule, are only so many occupations performed with God: in choir the praises of God are sung, God is visited in the Blessed

Sacrament, he is read about in spiritual books, nay, even during meal times there is spiritual reading; there is constant intercourse with God by frequent confession and Communion, by hearing holy Mass, by the daily examen of conscience, and by the prayers that are to be said every day according to rule; all manual and other labor is done for God with a pure intention. I will not speak of the wonderful lights and inspirations that the good God, who never allows himself to be outdone in generosity, plentifully bestows on the soul which has given itself to him, and sacrificed for his sake all that the world can give. Again I say, happy and heavenly state, in which the soul is always united with God, and God with the soul!

II. Just as our understanding cannot but think of something during our waking moments, so our hearts cannot be without loving something; and as the understanding is always occupied with what the heart loves, so our hearts must most love that on which our thoughts turn oftenest. Do you wish to know what you love, then see what you think. Is that so? Then I have done enough to prove that the Religious state is that in which God is most loved, for I have shown that it is the state in which God is most thought of. I grant that one must love God, even in the world, in every state ordained by God; I acknowledge that there are many zealous servants and friends of God in the world, so that I am sometimes covered with confusion when I visit such people, especially the poor and afflicted, and see how resigned they are to the divine will, and how peacefully and contentedly they live in the Lord, amidst all their afflictions. But all must agree with me in one thing, that the perfect, true, and constant love of God cannot be near so easy nor so general in a state of life in which the thoughts are seldom directed to God, because they are filled with worldly cares. How difficult, how rare, how almost impossible it is to love God always and God alone, where a hun-

dred things assail the eyes, ears, and other senses daily to induce them to love something besides God; where a hundred occasions and dangers seduce one into loving things that are against God and his law! It would be a wonder to touch pitch and not be defiled; a wonder to have free intercourse with all creatures and not to have any love for them! In a word, experience shows that, if God is loved in the world, there are a thousand things loved besides God, or not for God's sake; the heart is divided, and, by a great injustice, the smallest and worst part of it is generally given to God.

The pure, undivided love of God, if it can be found anywhere on earth, must surely take up its dwelling in the soul of him who, living of his own accord and through love for God, in a poor cell, away from all dangers and occasions of sin, occupies himself with God alone. If he sometimes thinks of the world and its goods, he looks upon them as only things that he renounced in his profession forever, as things that he would now be prepared to renounce, if he had not done so already. Under such circumstances, can we believe that the Religious can love the world? How can he love anything but God alone? And since his holy resolution grows stronger every day, and he is determined never to change it, how can he ever cease to love God? Therefore, his is a pure and constant love; it is an imitation and forerunner of the love which the Angels and Saints in heaven have for God.

III. If the Religious thinks of God, what a consolation it is to have in him a dear Friend, a Saviour, a Father, a Spouse, and one who will repay every service rendered him! If he thinks of himself, what a consolation to find himself in the house of God, in the vestibule of heaven, amongst the servants of God! What a consolation to think: God has done me the honor, in preference to so many thousands, of selecting me as one of his privileged servants, to be constantly occupied with

him, and to devote myself in a special manner to his service. What a consolation to think that God has freed me from the many cares and anxieties of the world, and from so many dangers and occasions of sin. He has placed me in a house in which I have so many companions to encourage me by their good example, to instruct me by their good advice, and to help me in the divine service by their prayers, so that I am almost compelled to save my soul; in a house in which Jesus Christ himself has fixed his dwelling, for he is present in the Most Holy Sacrament, and I can visit him as often as I will, whenever obedience allows; and, when I die, death can take nothing away from me, except the life that I have spent in the service of God, and that life will then be changed into a far better one. What a consolation to hear the testimony of one's own conscience assuring one that he may believe without presumption that he is serving God as God wishes; that all his works from morning till night, performed in obedience, are pleasing to God; that he is on the narrow path to heaven; that he loves God and is loved by God, and that it is no presumption for him to hope that he will enjoy God forever.

Finally, if the Religious thinks of the world, and of what takes place therein, what consolation it is for him to consider: the world may do as it likes; I have nothing to hope and nothing to fear from it. I can sit down peacefully, like a bird in its nest, and sing a joyful hymn to my Lord and my God, by whose fatherly hand I am fed, and allow him to dispose of me as he pleases. Oh, what greater happiness can there be?

Now, is there anything that can disturb the joy and peace of such a state? Perhaps the subjection and chastisement of the body, and the self-denial and mortification required by the Religious state. Alas, how far men go astray who think that! The very mortifications, the tears and sufferings of pious souls, are a thousand times sweeter than all the pleasures of worldly societies and banquets. These are what they seek, and their

joy is to be able to suffer and to die with their suffering Spouse.

Happy souls, who will one day have the grace of being called to this state, when that day comes, I would wish to say to you, in the words of the Archangel Raphael to Tobias' family, after he had declared to them that he was the guide who accompanied the younger Tobias on his journey: "Bless ye the God of heaven, give glory to him in the sight of all that live, because he hath shown his mercy to you" (Tob. 12 : 6). Ah, if you should have a longing for this state, do not repress it; look upon it as a scout sent out to see how your heart is toward God, and whether he can speak still further to it, without any fear of his voice being neglected. But, reflect on the matter seriously; for they alone who are called by God to that state, and who desire to live always according to its rules, enjoy the happiness that I have described. Once more I say to you, think well of the matter; first with God, by earnest, humble prayer; then with a pious confessor who knows your soul; and finally with your parents, who are not to be passed over. At least, all of you may learn from this that you are not to expect to find a paradise of happiness in the married state alone, as is generally the opinion among young people, who look upon the first feeling of love they experience as a vocation, and rush blindly into marriage, on the first favorable opportunity. Of course, such people pay little attention to the call of God. So that we may apply here the terrible words of to-day's Gospel: "Many are called, but few are chosen." Many are called by God to the Religious state, but few are chosen for it, because they think they will find some wonderful degree of happiness in some other state, and some fearful misery in the religious state, and so they reject the call of God.

God calls all men to true happiness and to their eternal salvation, though not in the same way. Meanwhile, whatever state we are in, our principal business is to know God, to love him, and to serve him. If your duties and occupations do not allow

you to think of God constantly, at least do not forget him. Think of him often during the day by renewing your good intention, by which you offer up all your ordinary acts to his honor and glory. If you cannot have a constant, perfect love of God, at least love him so constantly as never to offend him by a deliberate mortal sin, for the sake of money, pleasure, or other creatures. If you do not feel that inward consolation and joy of the heart in God, give him at least the consolation of knowing that you will bear patiently, through love of him, your daily trials, difficulties, and cares. The more dangers threaten your soul in your state of life, the more careful must you be in avoiding occasions of evil, to which no evident necessity compels you. If your state of life fills you with many cares, let your greatest care be the business of your salvation, so that you may keep yourself and those under your care in the grace of God, and that you and they may attain eternal happiness. Think often: what good is everything in the world to me, if I do not go to heaven? Go, therefore, into the vineyard of the Lord; fulfil the duties of the state in which God has placed you, work till evening, when the steward of the vineyard will call the laborers, and pay them the penny of life everlasting. Amen.

Sexagesima Sunday.

The Great Grace of a Vocation to the Religious State.

"*To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.*"—Luke 8 : 10.

To you, who have left the little you had for my sake; to you, who still follow me, is given, in preference to others, something special—a special light, knowledge, grace, and hope of the kingdom of God. Thus said Christ to his Apostles. To you it is given, I can also say, in his name, to all of you who are called by God to the Religious state, and who obey the call. To you also a special grace is given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and to have, even in this life, a foretaste of the happiness that awaits you in that kingdom. But you ask: Can we have heaven twice—here in this life, and in eternity also? No, that cannot be. St. Paul says: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14 : 21). All must travel by the rough and difficult way of the Cross in order to get there. But if, in the midst of these tribulations, crosses, and sufferings, God can give to the souls that love him such sweet consolation that heaven is opened to them, then I must say, yes, a Religious who lives according to his rule in a well-ordered convent has two heavens; one in this life, by the constant contemplation, love, and enjoyment of God; and another in eternity, which, according to the divine promises, must necessarily follow the first.

I. The vocation of the Religious state, when it is faithfully accepted, is a certain pledge, a sure sign of future happiness in the kingdom of God.

II. Parents, rejoice if that great happiness is given to your children.

III. Children, do not reject this grace, if God offers it to you.

I. The Religious vocation is a sign of salvation. For where, as a general rule, does one live with a purer heart and conscience, than in a Religious Order? It is a holy, pure, and sublime state, in which one lives more purely, falls more rarely, repents more quickly, and advances more cautiously. To commit a deliberate mortal sin, what a terrible misfortune that would be for a soul devoted to God! The very thought of it makes one tremble.

The holy Fathers compare this state to martyrdom. He who dies as a martyr for the faith, or for some other virtue, is so certain of his salvation that it is not allowed to pray for him. Now, the Religious life is a martyrdom, and a far more difficult and daily martyrdom of body and soul, than to keep the faith and one's conscience pure. Almost everything that the martyrs have to suffer, and almost everything that they have to console them, the Religious has to suffer and to enjoy. See, now, if that is the case. As far as the sufferings of the martyrs of Christ are concerned, they have four things to undergo: they are deprived of all their temporal wealth, they are dragged away from house and home and from all their friends, even the nearest and dearest, their bodies are tortured in various ways, and finally they are deprived of life. There you have a sketch of the seeming cruelty with which the love of God treats a Religious. In the first place, what is the vow of poverty but an innocent thief, who robs him at once of all his property and leaves him only enough to buy a small room, as his prison during life, and a grave after death. And not only does it take away everything from him that he really possessed, but it does what no other thief could do, and deprives him of every-

thing that he could inherit, and leaves him no hope of ever possessing anything. Again, the Religious is driven out of house and home into poverty, he is torn away from all he loved on earth, from all who loved him in the world, from friends and acquaintances, from brothers and sisters, from father and mother, and that forever. If he is occasionally allowed to see them, he is then like St. Alexius, who lived concealed as a poor stranger, under the steps of his father's house; he can see his parents for a short time, but he has no longer a mere natural love of flesh and blood for them, for his love is now supernatural and directed to God alone. Again: to watch while others are sleeping, to fast and abstain when others are eating and drinking, to treat the body as an enemy, with the greatest severity, always to resist sensuality, to renounce all the comforts and delights of the flesh, to desire and seek for nothing but crosses and sufferings with his crucified Redeemer, is not that a protracted martyrdom, by which the body is tortured?

Finally, the principal and most necessary part of martyrdom is death. In the same way the principal and most necessary part of the Religious state is death. The Religious can truly say with St. Paul: "For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4 : 6). And what is, in reality, the Religious profession of poverty, chastity, and obedience, if not a kind of death by which a man dies to all the wealth, honors, and joys of the world, and to himself and his own freedom, by which, too, he buries himself between the four walls of his cell, so as not to live henceforth for any creature, but for Jesus Christ, whom he has selected as his Spouse?

The Religious state is a more difficult martyrdom, for martyrs offer up their lives but once; they can suffer only one death. But a true Religious must offer up his life a thousand times to the same death; as long as it pleases God, he must live

so as to die every day, and daily to offer himself as a holocaust. The martyrs in the midst of their torments could almost grasp their eternal crown, for the end of their sufferings was not far off. But in the austerities of the Religious life, the crown of eternal life is seen only at a distance; it must be striven for, and suffered for, and no one knows how long.

Christian sons and daughters, what think you of all this? What do your hearts say to you? Does it not seem as if I described the Religious state in such vivid colors with the intention of frightening you away from it, and depriving you of all inclination and courage for it, instead of urging and exhorting you to it? Oh, no; such is not my intention; but I must tell you candidly what that state is in itself, so that each one who feels that he is called to it by God, may know what he has to choose. Still, for one who is really determined to follow the call of God, I am not afraid that he will be in the least frightened.

Meanwhile, they who receive the grace of vocation experience that the Religious life, which has its share of the torments of the martyrs, has also its share of their unspeakable consolations and joys. We sometimes shudder with horror when we think of how terribly some of them were slowly tortured to death; but if we could have beheld them in their sufferings we should see them, like St. Ignatius, exciting the lions and wild beasts to attack them more fiercely; or with St. Lawrence, laughing on the glowing gridiron, as if they had lost all feeling. We should hear them say that they find it more difficult to bear the great consolation and inward joy they experience, than the torments inflicted on them.

In the same way, they who love the vain world, who are inexperienced in the path of virtue, and who have never found out how sweet the Lord is, have a fearful idea of the Religious life when they hear of its austerities. How great a mistake they make! Look at Religious themselves and ask them about it,

and they will not be able to conceal their contentment, and their inward joy and peace. Nor do I wonder at it; that generous and merciful God, who can make the sufferings of the martyrs sweet to them, who even grants pleasures to sinners, his sworn enemies, can he not also fill with exquisite sweetness far surpassing worldly delights, the hearts of his dearest children, who, through love of him, have left all the pleasures and joys of earth, and who care for nothing but to love him and to please him? Certainly, he can do so! The words of the psalmist are literally true: "Better is one day in thy courts, above thousands" (Ps. 83 : 11). Better and more pleasant is one day in thy house, oh, Lord, amongst the children devoted to thee, than a thousand years in the tumult and false happiness of the world!

II. Christian parents, for God's sake do not be troubled nor disturbed, as is often the case, if one of your children, even the dearest, or the only one, is called by God to that high state. Rejoice, rather, that you can give and sacrifice your child to God, and thus insure his temporal and eternal happiness. Rejoice that you can place your child where he can best pray for his own salvation and yours. There was in Italy, in the year 1715, a nobleman, whose eldest son disclosed to him (as a good child ought), in several letters, the fact that God had called him to the Religious state. The nobleman sent an answer to his son, of which the following is a short extract: "My dear son: I did not determine to give my consent to your request at once, because I thought it necessary to prove your resolution, and to know what moved you to it. But now, since your letters prove it, I cast myself at the feet of Jesus Christ, and give my hearty consent to your request, and, in the name of God, I bestow on you my fatherly blessing. You have received a great and special grace from the divine mercy. I heartily rejoice that nothing in the world can become your master, and

that you have so soon heard the divine inspirations that so lovingly call you to the Religious state. Oh, what a grace for you, that God selects you in preference to so many others for his service! Go on, then, my son! Do not allow any earthly thing to come between you and your God! It is my duty to remind you of this, it is yours to fulfil it. Rest in peace, my son. I resign you into the loving hands of your heavenly Father. Although the separation cost me many tears, yet I shed them on account of the unspeakable joy I feel in seeing that you are chosen by the Holy Ghost for such great happiness. Therefore, my son, take leave of me and all belonging to you for the last time. God bless you! 'Bless the Lord, live joyfully; and because thou hast heard the voice of thy God, all blessings shall come upon thee.'" Such was that father's answer. Which plainly proves that he was influenced, not by flesh and blood, nor by the false maxims of the vain world, but by the Spirit of God. Christian parents, have you the same dispositions? Oh, if all fathers and mothers were thus well disposed toward God and the salvation of their children, how many sons and daughters would be called to that happy state by the voice of God?

III. But you, children, to whom that great grace is offered by an interior inspiration from God, rejoice in the Lord with all your hearts, and do not reject the proffered grace, or incur the danger of losing temporal as well as eternal happiness. Be careful, especially when you are deliberating about a state of life, not to make yourselves unworthy of such a grace by imitating the vanities of the world, by associating with persons of the opposite sex, or by consenting to grievous sin; and do not allow that grace to be taken away from you through want of opportunity to correspond with it; but prepare your hearts by the practice of virtue, and chiefly of Christian humility and modesty, that you may all the better hear and obey the

call of God. You are bound to honor father and mother, and to show them the most humble love and obedience; that is true; but if your parents, knowing that you are called to the Religious life, and after you have declared your holy purpose to them, and when you have the opportunity of carrying it into effect, they not requiring your help for their support, if they, in any way, try to hinder you, then obedience to them would not be obedience to God, and with all childlike respect you must absolutely refuse to do what they ask of you. Remember how David acted when he went to fight the giant Goliath. How many reasons were brought forward to deter him from his purpose! One of his brothers accused him of putting forward this as a pretext for leaving home and gratifying his curiosity by seeing what was going on in the camp: "I know thy pride and the wickedness of thy heart, that thou art come down to see the battle." When he presented himself to Saul and said: "I, thy servant, will go, and will fight against the Philistine," he was laughed at, for he appeared too young and weak: "Thou art not able to withstand this Philistine, nor to fight against him, for thou art but a boy" (1 Kings 17 : 28, 32, 33), said Saul. Nevertheless David repeated: "I will go." And he went against the giant, with his staff in his hand, trusting in God, in whose name he attacked Goliath, slew him and returned victorious. Christian sons and daughters, in the same way your friends and acquaintances, your brothers and sisters, your fathers and mothers may perhaps try to keep you from entering Religion. They will say to you: You have no vocation, but only curiosity to see what is going on in the convent. Sometimes they will express pity for your youth! What are you thinking of? You are only a child; you have not strength enough for such a life, etc. Sometimes they will try to frighten you with the difficulties and trials of the Religious life; but do not mind their empty talk, say boldly: I will go. God calls me, I will go. He who places the burden on my

shoulders will also give me strength to bear it. My mind is made up to follow the call of God. Remember the words of our Lord in the Gospel: "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters,. . . . he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14 : 26).

Finally, you who, knowing the will of God, have really determined to enter Religion, think and say with joy what Samuel said to the High Priest: "Thou hast called me, oh, Lord, behold me!" (1 Kings 3 : 6.) I know whereto and wherefore thou callest me to a state of humility, poverty, crosses, and mortification. But that is the very state that I willingly embrace, in order to become more like my poor, humble, crucified Redeemer. I desire no other reward but thee, oh, God; no other treasure but thee; no consolation or happiness but in thee alone! If the hundredfold reward promised in this life should fail, yet thy word cannot fail; therefore I desire nothing more than to possess thee, oh, God of my heart, in eternal life. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

SHROVE-TIDE.

"*He shall be delivered to the Gentiles.*"—Luke 18 : 32.

If there is any time in the year at which insult is offered to our Lord by sinners, at which Christians deliver up their Redeemer again to be mocked at by heathens and to be ill-treated by them, it is during these few days before Ash Wednesday. Generally speaking, people imagine, or, at least, act as if they believed it to be true, that everything is allowed during this time—dissipation, drunkenness, impurity, dangerous and heathenish amusements and balls are mere recreations that are

perfectly lawful during Shrove-tide. Permit me to disabuse you of this false idea, and to show that no more liberty is allowed to do evil, or to place the soul in danger of sin now, than at any other time.

No more liberty is allowed in unlawful things at Shrove-tide, than at any other time. He who speaks and acts contrary to this, delivers up Jesus Christ to the Gentiles to be mocked.

If really more freedom were allowed in these days than at other times, the cause must be either from some change in God, who does not wish us to serve him now the same as at other times, or from some change in our state of life and religion which does not require such great holiness of life from us at this time, or else from some change in our own souls, which at this season have a business to attend to that is far different from the business of their salvation. But none of these suppositions are correct, and, therefore, this part of the year should not differ from the other parts as far as the service of God is concerned.

1. Is not God the same now as he was at Christmas-time? Was he better, holier, wiser, or juster a few months ago than he is to-day? Is he worthy of less honor, fear, and love? Has he in this season given free leave to commit all kinds of vices? Does he hate and condemn sin less now than formerly? How is it that this season has the privilege of allowing what is forbidden at other times? It is an article of faith that the world and its usages are at enmity with the service of God; could there be any time, then, in which worldly pleasures might be indulged in without restraint, and when people are allowed to forget God, to serve the world, and to follow its corrupt usages? Oh, no; God is always the unchangeable Lord, who says of himself: "I am the Lord, and I change not" (Malach. 3 : 6).

He is still the same most perfect God, who deserves our love

during Shrove-tide as well as during Lent; the same infinite, omnipresent God, who must be honored in all places over the whole world; the same eternal God, who must be served at all times; the same jealous God, who cannot allow any one to share our hearts with him, nor permit himself to be defrauded of a moment of time; the same God of infinite holiness, who must hate and detest sin always. "To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike" (Wisd. 14 : 9). He still remains the same most just God, who can allow no wickedness to go unpunished, and who cannot give to any one a single moment in which he may lawfully sin. "He hath given no man license to sin" (Eccles. 15 : 21). He remains the same provident God, who has never promised his help and grace to those who expose themselves to danger without necessity; nay, he assures us, on his own word, that he will abandon such presumptuous men to their own weakness, and will let them perish in the danger; for his threats and warnings hold good at Shrove-tide, as well as at any other time. "Give not place to the devil" (Ephes. 4 : 27). "Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh" (Matth. 18 : 7), that is, by whom others are placed in the dangerous occasion of doing, speaking, or thinking evil. The warning of Christ holds good at all times: "And take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness" (Luke 21 : 34). So also with the words: "What I say to you, I say to all: Watch" (Mark 13 : 37). Be careful; close the gates of your senses, that death may not enter your souls. It always remains true that: "He that loveth danger shall perish in it" (Eccl. 3 : 27). And what the Apostle says of those sins that are generally committed at Shrove-tide is always true also: "They who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God" (Galat. 5 : 21).

2. Therefore it is not allowed to lead a more careless, dissipated life at this season than at any other, as far as God is concerned; and if you say to the contrary, you belong to the rabble

who delivered up Jesus to the scorn of the Gentiles, and you act most unjustly toward your Supreme Lord if you take anything away, during these days, from the love and service you owe him. Do you think that a whole lifetime would be too much for the service of God? Would it be too much for a God who has loved you from all eternity, and will love you for all eternity; for a God who in human form gave up his whole life for your salvation? Ah, if you had a hundred thousand lives, they would not be enough to make a full return for his love! Therefore: "Fear the Lord thy God" (Levit. 19 : 32), at all times.

It is Shrove-tide, you say; but I suppose you remain a reasoning being at Shrove-tide. You are still a Catholic, and make profession of the law, faith, and religion of Jesus Christ. Is not that so? For you certainly do not wish to deny your faith, nor, if it were possible, to blot out the baptismal character from your soul. Now, it is an incontestable truth that every one is bound at all times to act as he knows his state and duty require, for every one who makes profession of any state is bound to act as becomes that state. This doctrine is admitted even in the perverse world, which teaches that all should behave in a manner suitable to their birth, station, and occupation.

Now, I ask, is Christianity an empty imagination? Is that protestation that we have made in Baptism to renounce the devil, the flesh, and the world, with its vain practices, a mere fable? Can there be any time in the year at which it is permitted to act in a manner unbecoming the name of Christian, and to dishonor the dignity of our state? What is a Christian? He is one who has a special relationship to God, his heavenly Father; what Jesus is by nature, the Christian is by adoption; he receives by baptismal regeneration what Jesus received by birth. The Apostle St. Paul says: "You have received the spirit of the adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father)" (Rom. 8 : 15). St. John says: "Behold what manner of charity the

Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God" (1 John 3 : 1). What is a Christian? He is one who belongs to God the Holy Ghost, whose dwelling-place he is. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3 : 16.) Can any greater dignity be imagined than to be a child of God, a brother of Jesus Christ, and the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost? What is the profession and duty of a Christian? His name of child of God shows clearly enough what reverence and love he ought to have for his heavenly Father at all times and in all places. If he is a member of Christ, he must represent in his own person the life of his humble, thorn-crowned Head. If he is a temple of God, he must keep himself in purity and holiness as a vessel consecrated to God: "For the temple of God is holy; which you are" (1 Cor. 3 : 17).

See, then, if you can reconcile the holiness and nobility of your state with the vanities and dissipations of the world, the promises you made in Baptism and the duties of your holy state with the many sins and follies that are generally committed at this season.

3. Finally, we have an immortal soul, and if it suffers injury, what good would it do us to have had all the pleasures of the world during Shrove-tide? We have also an implacable enemy, who is always lying in wait for us, and who spies out every moment for a chance of ruining us. Perhaps the devil is asleep during Shrove-tide? Or he is weaker and not so well able to tempt us, or else is our nature stronger and better able to resist him, when we leave every door and window open to him, than at other times, when we often have enough to do, even in church and during prayer, to resist him? We have also death to fear during Shrove-tide; an uncertain death that may happen at this time as well as at any other: a terrible death, that will at once launch us into a long eternity. Are we now, perchance, better protected against the countless unforeseen accidents that may

cut short the thread of life at any moment? Are we better prepared to make the long journey into eternity, if our time should come when we are in the midst of sinful indulgence? We have also God's judgments to expect, and he will demand a strict account of every idle word, nay, even our good deeds will be scrutinized. Will nothing of what we do during Shrove-tide appear in that judgment? We have a heaven to hope for, and a hell to avoid. Is that fire extinguished in which sinners are to burn, or will it ever be extinguished? Is that kingdom destroyed in which the just are to reign, or is it worth so little now that we need not trouble ourselves about it? If we gain heaven during these days, shall we be less happy than if we gained it at another time? If we go to hell during Shrove-tide, shall we be less miserable and unhappy than at another time?

But, they say, that is too severe! Must we always remain at home and give way to melancholy? Lent is coming on; we must enjoy ourselves now; if something occasionally slips in that is not all right we can make it good during Lent; in a few days more we shall have time enough to atone for it all. But what a wretched excuse that is! Because we must watch over ourselves a little more carefully and restrain our senses in a few days, ought we, therefore, now to allow ourselves every liberty? We shall soon weep for our sin; must we now collect material for our tears, in order to atone for them? The Catholic Church will soon forbid us flesh-meat; ought we, therefore, now to indulge in carnal pleasures? Bye-and-bye we shall be exhorted to self-denial; must we, therefore, now drown our reason in drunken excess? Penance shall then be preached to us; let us now act so as to leave something to repent of. We must go to confession at Easter; let us now do something that will give us matter for confession. What wicked talk that is! We *must* enjoy ourselves! Why *must?* What necessity is there for it? Oh, Lent is coming on. But is Lent, then, so terrible? You seem to think that it is like going into another

world, where you will never see each other again! What is your idea of Lent? Do you intend to leave the world and bury yourselves in a monastery, or hide away in a cave in the desert? Will you have to suffer hunger and thirst, and to macerate your bodies by vigils and disciplines? I do not think that the spirit of penance will lead you so far. Perhaps the ashes that will be placed on your foreheads on Ash Wednesday require that you should now enjoy yourselves, as a necessary preparation? No, you say. What then? Oh, we must fast, unless we have a dispensation, and abstain from the use of flesh-meat. Yet there are many who would be overjoyed to have on Easter Sunday the food that others have during Lent, although it is not flesh-meat. Ah, how many there are who have not always bread enough to eat! They must abstain every day; their fast lasts through the year; they can never amuse themselves, and yet God keeps them in health and strength. But we must amuse ourselves; we cannot do without it! What folly to imagine that! We have reason to do penance our whole lives long; we must work out our salvation in fear and trembling; as long as the present time lasts, we are not sure of heaven. It is not those who now laugh whom Christ calls blessed, but those who now weep. And we have cause enough for weeping every hour and moment; our past sins, even if we had committed only one, the constant danger of sin, the uncertainty of dying a happy death and going to heaven and escaping the pains of hell, all these things should excite us to constant watchfulness, and to childlike fear, humility and modesty.

Yes, lest I should be too strict in this matter, I grant that you, too, should amuse yourselves at Shrove-tide, but in a lawful and Christian manner. Amuse yourselves, then, but with a good and holy intention for the honor and glory of God. Examine for a moment all the amusements of Shrove-tide, and place the good intention before them, to see how they will harmonize with it. For instance, I will drink to excess, for the

honor and glory of God; I will enjoy myself this evening with this or that person in an unlawful manner, for the honor and glory of God; I will spend the night dancing, disguised, and dressed immodestly, for the glory of God and in union with the bitter Passion and death of Jesus Christ, that God may be more pleased with what I do, and may be more honored by it. Is this consistent? Is it not rather making a mockery of God? Enjoy yourselves, but like children of God, who keep their Father always before their eyes and in their hearts; enjoy yourselves, but without sin, without danger to your souls.

I turn to you, beloved, pious, and Christian brethren who are here present, and I ask you in the words of our Lord, which he addressed to his Apostles, after many had abandoned him: "Will you also go away?" (John 6 : 68.) My beloved disciples, you alone are with me, all the others have left me; will you follow their bad example and leave me also? My dear Christians, I ask you the same question; will you join the impious rabble, who during this season offend God by unlawful pleasures, or will you not rather remain faithful to God, like the twelve Apostles, like all good and pious Christians? True friendship shows itself at all times, and especially when the beloved one is abandoned and in distress. What a joy it will be for the Angels if you try to atone in some degree, by worthy confession and communion, by frequently visiting the Blessed Sacrament when it is exposed, by fervent prayer and by pious lives, for the insults that so many offer to their Creator during this time! You would be like Tobias, of whom the Scripture says: "When all went to the golden calves,. . . . he alone fled the company of all, and went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Israel" (Tob. 1 : 5).

First Sunday of Lent.

THE HAPPINESS OF THE UNMARRIED STATE.

"*The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve.*"—Matt. 4 : 1.

This is our last end, to this all our thoughts, words, and actions must tend; namely, to adore God, and serve him alone. Now, although God wishes to be adored and served by all men, yet not by all in the same manner, nor in the same state of life; for each one must serve him in that state to which he is called. I have before now treated of the excellence of the Religious state, and the happiness of those who, being called to it, live according to its rules. To-day I will speak of those who live in the world in the unmarried state, so that those children who are still deliberating about a state of life may know something about this, and see what they have to choose by the vocation and inspiration of God. I say, therefore,

One of the most excellent and happiest states is the unmarried state; therefore, they who are called to it should readily obey the voice of God and serve him alone.

By the words "unmarried people," I do not understand all those who, being still free, have entered neither the Religious nor the married state. Nor do I include those who wish to marry, but have as yet had no fit opportunity of so doing, on account of poverty, ill-health, weakness, and other hindrances, and who, therefore, have to remain unmarried against their will. All these people are certainly unmarried, but they are not in the unmarried state, which is a state fixed for life, and to which all, of both sexes, belong, who, according to the advice of the Apostle, have once for all made the resolution of not

marrying, nor of entering a Religious Order, but of remaining as they are to the end of their lives, and that, too, with a proper motive and object.

I say *with a proper motive and object;* for, to remain unmarried merely to escape the burdens, trials, cares, and annoyances of the married life, and meanwhile to live without restraint, to frequent the company of the opposite sex, to go often into society of all kinds, and to give way to sensual pleasures, which marriage alone can render lawful, and to do so without restraint whenever opportunity offers; that is no vocation from God, but an evident snare and treachery of the foul fiend, and it is a state in which countless sins are certainly committed against holy purity, a virtue that it is, humanly speaking, impossible to preserve among so many dangers and opportunities. It would be better for such people to get married, and they are bound in conscience either to do so, or to amend their lives. Oh, how many there are of this class, who deceive the world by a false appearance of chastity, and who make use of the glorious title of virginal purity as a cloak to conceal their abominations and impurities from the eyes of the world! Outwardly they are as white as doves, but inwardly they are as black as ravens that feed on stolen offal. I allude, therefore, only to those unmarried people who, for a supernatural end, that is, for the love of God, that they may serve him better, attend more carefully to their salvation, and be thus more certain of going to heaven, voluntarily renounce the lawful joys and pleasures of the married life, either by a firm resolution, or, what is still more meritorious and certain, by a vow of perpetual chastity and virginity, and who thus live unmarried, in virginal modesty and humility, rejecting, as far as possible, all society with persons of the opposite sex, and avoiding every occasion that might excite to sensuality. Such is the unmarried state in which one serves God, and God alone.

This is one of the happiest states. "Oh, how beautiful is

the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal; because it is known both with God and with men" (Wisd. 4 : 1). Oh, how glorious, noble, and happy is the state of those servants and handmaids of God, as long as they live according to it! The holy Martyr Ignatius, who lived just after the time of the Apostles, places this state, as to dignity, in the same rank as the anointed priests, saying: "Honor those who live in virginity, as you honor the priests of Christ." They are really children of Jesus Christ, says St. Ambrose, for Christ is the Father and Source of true virginity; because, when it was unknown and despised in the world, he chose to be born of a Virgin, in order to bring it from heaven down on earth and to introduce it there. St. Bernard does not hesitate to place them, to a certain extent, above the Angels. He says: "There is indeed a difference betwen a chaste man and an angel, but it is a difference of happiness, not virtue." It is natural for the Angels to be chaste, because they have no carnal desires; but for a man with a mortal body to observe chastity, in the midst of dangers, temptations, and natural evil inclinations, is, indeed, a great virtue. The Angels are chaste without difficulty; men, on the other hand, must combat and often do themselves violence, and therefore their chastity is more to be wondered at than that of the Angels. They are the most intimate servants of Jesus Christ who stand round his throne, and sing to him that canticle which no others can sing, as St. John says in the Apocalypse: "And no man could say the canticle but those hundred forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Apoc. 14 : 3, 4). But no matter how highly all those eulogies extol the unmarried state, they are all surpassed by one title of honor, which is, that that state is one of spiritual marriage with Jesus Christ, who is the lover and true Spouse of chaste souls.

St. Ambrose tells of a noble maiden whom her parents tried to force, against her will, into a marriage which the world would call a happy one. When she could no longer resist their violence, she ran to the church, clasped the altar in both arms, and said to her parents, who followed her: What do you want from me? What is it that you desire? That I should marry? Very well; be it so; but you must give me a bridegroom who is pleasing to me; otherwise I will not accept him. You must know that I desire one who has not his equal in nobility in all the world; I desire one who surpasses all others in knowledge and ability; one whose magnificence excels that of all men; whose treasures and riches are so great that I might buy the whole world with them; one who is the most beautiful of all, whose beauty never fades; one who will give me all kinds of joys and pleasures, without the least annoyance; one who will love me always, and who will certainly be always true to me; one who, in addition to all these things, can never die. Father, mother, can you find a bridegroom of that kind for me? If you can, I will obey you, and will give him my hand at once. But if he is wanting in a single one of these qualities, then I do not care for him, I will not have him; you must not trouble me about him. You should rather rejoice and congratulate me; for see, I have already found the Bridegroom whom I desire: Jesus Christ, the Son of the King of glory, who is here really present on the altar. To him I now vow, in your presence, perpetual chastity, and I take you as witnesses of my vow. At last I have what I so much longed for and desired. The very same thing may be said, to their great joy and consolation, by all those who serve their God in perpetual chastity, in the unmarried state. Away with all who can love me in the world! I have chosen another Lover and Spouse, who has said to me by the prophet Osee: "And I will betroth thee to me forever" (Osee 11 : 19).

But, some will think, it is, after all, an unenviable happiness.

Such a rich, noble, and loving Spouse ought to bring something to the soul who thus chooses him. What marriage gift does he bring? His bride ought certainly to share in his riches. But if she has nothing of her own, nor from her parents, she will certainly not grow richer by remaining in the unmarried state. Experience teaches that many such people barely manage to live. Instead of such a bride living with her Bridegroom in joy and pleasure, all means of sensual pleasures, such as she could lawfully enjoy in the married state, are cut off from her, and hopelessly, too. Is not that a miserable kind of happiness? Yes, truly it is so, if we must judge of it by the senses alone; but Christ has said before now, when he was urging his disciples to perfection: "Not all understand this word." Our Bridegroom, they can answer, has said of himself: "I am not of this world." So also the treasures and riches, the joys and pleasures, the honor and happiness we expect from him, "are not of this world;" although they are given to us already a hundredfold in this life by the inward peace of heart and conscience, and by the merits and treasures that we can amass for our souls in our state of life. Our real happiness is on high, where our Bridegroom holds his royal court.

Meanwhile, if all carnal pleasures are forbidden to us forever, that is what we desire; because we can thus keep our hearts more free from creatures and can more easily give them altogether to God and to divine things, as St. Paul says, when praising the unmarried state: "The virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord." While others, who are bound by matrimony, are in servitude, and have all sorts of cares and troubles, the virgin lives in freedom, and beyond the trouble of supporting herself decently, she has no other care, no other thought except to serve God in peace, and attend to the salvation of her soul. While others must adorn themselves to please the eye of a mortal man, we have time to adorn our souls with virtues, so as to please the God of all beauty alone. While

others, if their marriage is in the least degree unfortunate, are tormented by a hundred different trials, and lament too late the loss of their freedom, we have nothing of the kind to fear. Others, even if they have everything they wish, lose their bridegroom by death, and are left in sorrow, and often in poverty with their children: we need never fear that, for our Bridegroom can never be taken from us. Others, again, are separated from their bridegroom and from all they love, by death; we, when the hour of death comes, shall be eternally united to ours; that is what we expect and long for. Oh, what a glorious and happy state is that of the chaste servants and handmaids of God! "But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they so continue, even as I" (1 Cor. 7 : 8). "Therefore, both he that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well; and he that giveth her not, doth better" (1 Cor. 7 : 38).

Here I must condemn the reckless conduct of those boys and girls who throw away in their youth the treasure of their chastity—which is so precious in the sight of God, and so dear to Jesus Christ—at the first opportunity that offers, and even after that having deliberately sought out an opportunity of satisfying their beastly passions. Nay, they even rejoice and look upon it as a piece of good luck when they have a chance of losing this noble treasure, which, once lost, can never be recovered for all eternity. Foolish virgins! Unhappy souls! How I pity you! For you allow yourselves to be deceived by the flattering tongue and false words of some bird of prey, who, after he has deprived you of your best treasure, goes his way, and leaves you dishonored in the sight of God, and often in the sight of men, too! The world still wonders at the foolish gluttony of Queen Cleopatra, who, in order to say that she had eaten something costly, caused a pearl worth two hundred thousand crowns to be dissolved in vinegar, and swallowed it. Agrippina, that she might induce her spendthrift son, Nero, to amend his ways (after he had once given eight hundred thou-

sand Roman crowns to a man who pleased him, and who had no other merit), caused vast sums of money to be heaped together, and showed them to her son. Look, my son, she said, at the trifle you gave away yesterday! Christian youths and maidens! Your foolish extravagance is much more to be wondered at, or, to speak better, much more to be deplored. If it were possible to lay before you the treasure that you squander in a few moments, when you lose your virginal purity, you would see that it is not like Cleopatra's pearl, or Nero's treasure, but that it surpasses all the wealth of the world; for, to preserve it, many Saints have shed every drop of blood in their veins with pleasure, while you so foolishly sacrifice it for a short-lived gratification.

And you, wicked agents of the devil, you traitors and defilers of youth, who, by your immodest language and stories, wicked teaching, provocation, caresses, invitations and conversation, betray so many innocent souls to impurity! Should you not be afraid when you think that you have taken away from God that precious treasure, not only in yourselves, but in others also, and that you have given it over to the devil! What shameless audacity it would be to insult or dishonor a queen in the very presence of the king! But you are far more shameless and insolent, for you dare to do that to one who, as long as she is pure, is espoused to Jesus Christ, the King of kings: and you do it before the God who sees all things. Woe to you if that jealous Bridegroom, who cannot even allow his spouses to bring him a divided affection, has to judge you for your sins after your death!

Finally, I speak again to you, Christian sons and daughters, whom God has called to the unmarried state. Acknowledge thankfully and humbly your great happiness, which the Lord has given to you in preference to so many others; but be careful to serve him according to your state. You have kept your freedom, not to live more freely, but to be able all the better to

attend to the salvation of your soul. You have given up all idea of marriage and sensual love, and you have thereby received Jesus Christ as your Bridegroom; he will henceforth take possession of your hearts and keep them for himself alone. You are free from many domestic cares, therefore direct all your thoughts and desires to God and heavenly things. You have either vowed, or promised for God's sake, perpetual chastity; see that you keep your resolution in the midst of the dangers and temptations of the world, and to that end, and that you may be always faithful to your Bridegroom, you must lead careful, retired, modest, and humble lives. If you are determined to do so, then I congratulate you; resolve and say with the Spouse of the Canticles: "I found him whom my soul loveth, I held him, and I will not let him go" (Canticles 3 : 4). Amen.

Second Sunday of Lent.

THE DANGERS AND GRACES OF THE UNMARRIED STATE.

"*Lord, it is good for us to be here.*"—Matt. 17 : 4.

Thus Peter said when he saw our Lord in snow-white garments, and had a foretaste of his future glory in heaven. But while Christ was speaking with Moses and Elias about his future Passion and death, Peter and the other two disciples, terrified at hearing the voice of the heavenly Father saying: "Hear ye him," fell on their faces, sore afraid. Hitherto I have described the happiness of the Religious and the unmarried states; and some of you might say with Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Matt. 17 : 5); let us build tabernacles in

the unmarried state. Yes, that is true; and would that all who are called by God to that state so understood it! But there is one thing that they must not forget, lest, like Peter, a too late repentance may fill them with dread. Each state has its own joys, which attract us to it, but each one has also its difficulties and trials, which might frighten one away. And such is especially the case with the unmarried state, the happiness of which I described in my last sermon. I do not say this, Christian sons and daughters, to give you a dislike for that state; God forbid! With St. Paul, I rather advise you to embrace it, for it is good for you to remain as you are. My intention is simply to tell you what this state is in itself, and to show you how you may remain in it constantly. I say, then—

I. The unmarried state is full of dangers and temptations.
II. It is also full of graces and helps.

I. "The life of man on earth is a warfare" (Job 7 : 1), in which we have to contend with all kinds of enemies, and in which we are always surrounded by hundreds of dangers and temptations. This holds good for all. The pious are warned to be always prepared for combat: "Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation" (Eccles. 2 : 1). But this is true of none more than of you, Christian sons and daughters, who are espoused to Jesus Christ, in the state of perpetual chastity. For, the more precious the treasure that you have to guard, the more thieves you will find who, attracted by it, will be always on the lookout to deprive you of it. You are the snow-white lambs of the flock of Christ; and on that very account you have to guard yourselves all the more carefully from the attacks of the hungry wolves, who will be attracted by your whiteness. As far as purity is concerned, you are compared to the Angels. But do not, therefore, be too confident; remember that even the Angels in heaven were not safe, and that millions of them fell,

through pride, into the abyss of hell. You are the most intimate servants of Jesus Christ, who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; but for that very reason you will have many to envy you, who will try to deprive you of your Master's favor by every means in their power. The enemies who divide their forces when attacking other souls will unite together to make common cause against you. Some souls are attacked by the devil, others by the corrupt world, and others again are fiercely combated and led into sin by their own flesh. You will not be free from any of these: the three together, the devil, the world, and the flesh, will declare war on you, without truce or intermission.

1. The devil, whom the Scripture calls the unclean spirit and the sworn foe of purity, is filled with rage when he sees young boys and girls, who are apparently the weakest, courageously opposing his suggestions, and leading a chaste life; and because he has a bitter hatred against Jesus Christ, who destroyed his kingdom, and knows that God has selected you as his spouses and keeps you for himself, therefore the wicked spirit employs all means possible to deprive you of your purity. It is he of whom the Gospel says: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man...." (and you have driven him away from you by embracing the unmarried state), "he saith: I will return into my house, whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and, entering in, they dwell there. And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first" (Luke 11 : 24-26). Therefore, be cautious and vigilant: "Be sober and watch: because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5 : 8).

2. The other enemy who unites with the devil to hinder your holy purpose is the vain world, whose maxims, usages, and teaching are almost always opposed to the life of Jesus Christ

and to the teaching of his Gospel. I mean the worldly people among whom you have to live, whose society and companionship you cannot always avoid, and who will often put temptations in your way; for they will cajole you, laugh at, flatter, and caress you; they will lead you into places, occasions, and circumstances, in which the purity of the heart is in great danger of succumbing before long. You will see many things and hear many things which will soon deprive you of your precious treasure. If they can do nothing else, they will try to make you imitate their vain and apparently not unlawful usages, by which the spirit of the world will soon find a place in your heart, and the spirit of Jesus Christ will be driven out, little by little.

3. The third, and most formidable enemy, who is with you day and night, is your own flesh, the innate carnal desire of your nature, of which St. Paul says, with fear and trembling: "But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is, in my members" (Rom. 7 : 23). His meaning is: I constantly feel wicked desires that obstinately contend against the knowledge that I have, for they cannot bear to have the flesh so curbed that it can never enjoy forbidden pleasure. "Unhappy man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7 : 24.)

No doubt, Christian virgins, you have powerful enemies, against whom you must fight daily; but you have also most powerful protectors, who are always ready to fight on your side, and to gain the victory for you. I repeat that it is very difficult to keep one's purity untarnished amidst so many attacks; but the difficulty arises from the weakness of our nature, which supernatural grace can easily overcome. It is true that, in the world, you are exposed to many dangers of losing your chastity, but you must have confidence in him who encourages you by saying to you: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world" (John 16 : 33). He who has called you to this state

and given you the will to follow his call, will also enable you to fulfil what you have vowed or promised to him. The devil is an enraged dog, who can bark but cannot bite any one who does not wish to be bitten. The vain world is a decoy, that can charm and attract, but can draw no one into its net that does not wish to follow its usages. The flesh is a shameless and untamed beast; it can rise up insolently against the will and right reason, and thus trouble the spirit, but it cannot force any one to sin who does not deliberately submit to it. Yes, yes; the unmarried state is full of temptations and dangers, but it is also full of graces and helps, by which one can easily overcome them.

II. Nothing gives more concern to a bridegroom than to see strangers courting the love of the spouse whom he loves, and whose love he desires. Even an outward mark of friendliness shown to her, although it may not be dangerous, causes him pain and uneasiness; because his jealous love makes him afraid that she, whose whole heart he desires to possess, may feel an inclination for some one else. If a bridegroom is so jealous as to feel uneasy and troubled when a stranger shows his bride any mark of friendliness, because he thinks it might lessen her love for him, how much less could he suffer her to be made the object of an impure love, in his very presence? How could he look on and see violence offered to his beloved spouse without doing all in his power to save her? He would willingly expose his own life to danger, in order to rescue his spouse from dishonor. Your Bridegroom, Christian sons and daughters, to whom you have promised perpetual chastity, love, and fidelity, is Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the Almighty God, whom nothing can withstand. He is a tender lover of chaste souls, who shed every drop of his Blood for you; he is the jealous and loving Bridegroom of your purity, in which he cannot bear to see the least spot, who wishes to have your

hearts, and your whole hearts, for himself alone. Do you then think that he can look on when you are tempted and excited to unfaithfulness by his sworn enemies, without doing anything to help you? Can you imagine that he would allow that treasure, which he values so highly, and which you have resolved to keep forever through love of him, to be stolen from you by violence, and that he would not assist you in your necessity and save you from danger? Be not afraid! Let the dangers and temptations be what they will, Jesus Christ will not leave you without help. His own honor is concerned; he will not permit your purity to become the prey of robbers as long as you are not wanting in anything that your state requires of you.

And what is that? I answer: *true humility*, *modesty*, and *trustful prayer*. If you attend to these three things, you can defy all your enemies and need never fear them. Humility will drive away the devil and his inspirations; modesty will put to shame the world and the seductions of the children of the world; prayer will subdue the flesh, and keep its unruly desires in check. If you fail in any of these three things, then you will soon lose the treasure of your purity.

1. Humility is necessary to all men who wish to serve God and to save their souls. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5 : 5). To give us an example, he emptied himself and humbled himself even to the death of the cross; and since we publicly acknowledge a law and a Gospel, the fundamental doctrine of which is humility and self-abasement, and adore a Teacher who said: "Amen, I say to you; unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18 : 3). I repeat, that if humility is necessary for all men as a means of salvation, it is absolutely necessary, above all, to those who wish to preserve their virginal purity intact. Does any one, says St. Augustine, wish to exhort the faithful to perpetual chastity, according to the advice of St. Paul? Then he must not merely

describe the excellence and dignity of virginity, so as to excite a desire for it, but also he must exhort and warn those who embrace that state not to think anything more of themselves on that account. Married people, although they do not live in a state of perfection, like virgins, if they are humble, will follow the Lamb of God better than the virgin who is proud; nay, the latter is very far, on account of her pride, from him who says: "I am meek and humble of heart."

If you cannot, or will not, imitate the purity of Mary, at least imitate her humility, and you will have done enough. You can be saved without virginity, but not without humility. The humble soul that laments the loss of purity can please God; but without humility, not even Mary, the Queen of virgins, could please him.

And not only does virginity without humility fail to please God, but also, if you are not humble, no matter how chaste you are, you will certainly not long remain a pure virgin. You are like a tall tree that has not deep roots, which the first storm blows down. You are like a magnificent edifice, the foundations of which are not deep enough, and are built on sand, and which the first floods will carry away. Pride is the forerunner and chief cause of unchastity; and the justice of God generally permits the proud to fall into that degrading vice, so that they may learn to know their weakness and misery, and thus become humble. St. Paul says of himself, after having described how he was rapt up to heaven and saw there wonderful things, that man may not speak of: "And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me," to disquiet me, and torment me always, so that I might know that I am a poor mortal. Therefore, the crafty tempter, when he wishes to lead a soul into impurity, does not at once assail it with filthy temptations, for he knows well that they would have no effect on souls who fear God. What does he do, then? He attacks the spirit first,

suggests vain thoughts and self-conceit on account of the purity preserved for such a long time, and that makes the soul look upon itself as better, more pious, and more perfect than others. If he succeeds in finding room for these thoughts, he will not have much trouble in destroying purity; for he knows that it must fall when pride enters the heart. But if, with all his craft, he cannot destroy humility in that soul, then he despairs of effecting anything and must take to flight.

2. From this humility of the heart must spring the outward humility of the body, or that modesty and reserve which is another necessary means of conquering the second enemy of your purity, namely, the allurements and seductions of the world. Modesty is a virtue which restrains all the senses and keeps guard over our behavior, conduct, eating, drinking, and dress; it is the great ornament of all who practise it, but especially of the female sex. To gratify every curiosity of the eyes, and to allow them to roam about everywhere; to listen eagerly to what is going on in town; to allow liberties to be taken with one's self and to take them also with others, although they may be apparently harmless; to go about laughing and joking with persons of the opposite sex, although they may be near relations; to be anxious to see and be seen; to pay and receive many visits; to mix up with all sorts of company; to be vain and frivolous in dress; all that is unbecoming even in one who intends to be married; such a person is contemptible even in the eyes of the world, and although the world may flatter those who act thus, yet it ridicules them behind their backs.

What nonsense, some will think; I can be pure at heart, although I mix with people after the manner of the world; I need not sit like an owl at home; I intend to remain unmarried, and to preserve my purity, but I do not want to be called a devotee; I can best deceive the world by joining in its gayeties and conforming to its fashions and modes of life. Yes, you may deceive it, but take care that it does not deceive you first.

Think and say what you will, from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The outward behavior is an index of the dispositions of the heart. The property of true chastity is to tremble and fear at the very sight and voice of one of the opposite sex. Holy virginity is such a delicate flower that not alone the least touch, but even a look would cause it to wither. The proper place to preserve that flower is at home, alone in one's room, occupied with some suitable labor, unless one is obliged to go to church, to visit the sick, or to perform some other work of Christian charity and mercy which renders it necessary to go out of the house.

3. The third means of preserving perpetual chastity, in spite of the attacks of our worst enemy, the rebellious flesh, is earnest and hopeful prayer. It is an undoubted fact that perfect purity is a gift of God, and a most special gift, too, if we consider that the vast majority of men do not receive it. When Christ had explained to his disciples the indissolubility of the marriage tie they wondered at it, as an unheard-of thing, and said: "If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry;" he added: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given" (Matt. 19 : 10-12). And immediately after, when he had spoken of the state of virginity, he said: "He that can take it, let him take it." It is certain, also, that no one, in the midst of so many dangerous temptations and carnal desires, can preserve this great gift by his own strength, without a special help from God, as Solomon says of himself while he was still innocent: "And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, and this also was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was: I went to the Lord and besought him" (Wisd. 8 : 21). This is what the Apostle meant when he wrote: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of the power of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4 : 7). That is to say, that we may acknowledge the safeguard of the great treasure of virginity to be the working of the almighty

power of God and that we could not have it of ourselves. Now, according to the present arrangements of his providence, God does not generally give his gifts and graces unless to those who pray to him, and he has promised to grant everything to prayer; his wish is that we should humbly and constantly acknowledge before him that we always stand in need of his help.

Pray, then, constantly, nay, according to the advice of St. Paul, let your minds be always united to God. For you, especially, who have determined to observe perpetual chastity, it is necessary to follow this advice. Say daily to God, in the words of the Wise Man: I acknowledge, oh, Lord, and thou knowest it, that I cannot live chastely unless thou helpest me; therefore I fly to thee, as to my only Helper and Protector, in the dangerous combat that I have to sustain against the desires of the flesh.

Christian sons and daughters, who are called by God to the unmarried state, you have powerful weapons to repel the attacks of the enemies of your chastity, in true humility, inward and outward modesty, and fervent prayer. Use these weapons constantly, and you may say boldly with St. Peter: Lord, it is good for us to be here; we will live in this state until death! I rejoice, then, at the happiness that the Lord gives you on earth, and at that which you will possess when you will follow the pure Lamb of God, whithersoever he goeth, in heaven. Amen.

Third Sunday of Lent.

The Love of Married People for, and their Unity with, each other.

"Every kingdom, divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation."—Luke 11 : 7.

With this one objection Christ refuted the envious Pharisees, and showed that he did not drive out devils in the name of the devil. If one devil drove another out of a possessed person, then they would divide their own kingdom against itself; a thing which they certainly would not think of doing. Hitherto I have shown how young people are to take counsel, and how they are to follow the divine vocation when embracing the Religious or the unmarried state. I have also treated of the sanctity and dignity of marriage, as a Sacrament instituted by Christ; when I spoke of how one should prepare himself for it, if the marriage is to be a happy one, by inviting Jesus to, and securing his presence at the wedding, and keeping always in his friendship, thus making certain of eternal as well as temporal happiness. There are still some obligations of married people to be explained, to which I barely alluded in previous sermons; this I shall now undertake to do for your instruction and consolation, and that young people who think of marrying may know what sort of a state they are about to embrace. The first and most necessary obligation of married people is suggested by the text: "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation;" namely, that there must be constant love and unity between them; and I shall show in different ser-

mons how that unity may be preserved. I begin, therefore, to-day, and say—

I. The married state, where there is constant love and unity, is a state that is happy and pleasing to God.

II. Where love and unity are wanting, it is a miserable and an unhappy state.

I. The quiet, peace, and union of a state or community consist in the perfect harmony and uniformity of its various members, so that inferiors are subject to superiors, and each one does what his duty or office requires of him, and all live on good terms with each other. This union and harmony makes a state happy and prosperous, while without it there can be no regular government, and there will be nothing but confusion, disunion, uneasiness, and anarchy. Experience teaches us also, with regard to created things, that they find their greatest strength in union. The light of the stars is very beautiful, as long as they keep in their proper spheres, but if a star gets out of its place, or the moon comes too near the sun, darkness and confusion are the result. There are many magnificent buildings to be seen, but their magnificence depends on the union and harmony of their parts: if one of these parts is wanting, the whole edifice falls in ruins. It is very agreeable to hear good music played on fine instruments, as long as the latter are well tuned, but if there is the slightest discord the music is completely spoiled.

St. Paul points to the human body as a wonderful instance of the divine power, but in what does its stature, beauty, and health consist? In the union and just proportion of its members. If these latter commenced to quarrel with each other, or to be dissatisfied with their respective positions; if the hands wished to take the place of the eyes, and the feet that of the hands, or if the mouth desired to be raised as high as the forehead, what a monster would not man become? The same may

be said of a country, town, or community, in which many individuals must live together. It will be a happy and joyful society if every one is contented with the duty and position assigned to him, and lives in peace and love with those around him. But if this unity is wanting there is nothing but quarrels, divisions and dissensions between inferiors and superiors, as well as between equals among themselves. "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation."

Married Christians, if a country or town is a large family and community, your state is also a community on a small scale. The former consists of many individuals, yours only of two, the husband and wife; but for that very reason, if your state is to be happy, peace and unity are all the more necessary for you; for, if quarrels and dissensions arise in a large community, where there are many individuals, at least every one is not my enemy, and I can have my own friends to support and console me, so that I may avoid those who dislike me and keep out of their way, and thus enjoy a certain amount of peace and quiet. But when two persons make up the whole community, and these two are united by a bond that death alone can dissolve, and are bound to spend their lives together, to be always in each other's company, and to keep all their affection and love for each other, how could they find peace, consolation or joy if they were given to quarrelling and dissensions? So that almost all their peace and happiness consists in mutual love and unity, inasmuch as one is duly submissive to the other, and readily and willingly performs the duties imposed on him or her by God, while both agree by word and work in their opinions and inclinations, and have one mind, one soul, one heart, as our Lord says, speaking of married people: "Therefore, now *they are not two, but one flesh*" (Matt. 19 : 6), and one individual, as far as mind, spirit, and heart are concerned.

Certainly, that state is pleasing to God and man, and happy and desirable to the married couple, when man and wife thus

live in constant peace and harmony. The Lord says: "With three things my spirit is pleased, which are approved before God and men—*the concord of brethren*, and *the love of neighbors*, and *man and wife that agree well together*" (Ecclus. 25 : 1, 2). Nor is it any wonder that God has such pleasure therein, since he says of himself that he is a God of peace and recognizes as his children those who live peacefully together: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5 : 9). What an edifying example may they not give their children and servants by never uttering the least word of contradiction, abuse, or contempt! How powerfully they may incite their neighbors and acquaintances to follow their example, when people say of them that are indeed a happy couple, and as united as if they were Angels.

But the married couples themselves derive the greatest happiness and profit therefrom, even as far as this life is concerned, for there must be prosperity and grace in their house. Just as peace causes the prosperity of a whole country, so love and unity between man and wife are the source of all blessings. Union makes small things great, says the proverb, while disunion makes great things small. "*A threefold cord is not easily broken*" (Eccles. 4 : 12). By the threefold cord the Hebrews understood the bond of marriage, which unites three kinds of persons together—*the husband*, *the wife*, and *the children;* the closer the union of hearts and minds among these three, the greater will be their happiness and prosperity.

And what could disturb the happiness and peace of married people who love each other and live well together? I know that they have many difficulties, annoyances, and trials to contend with daily. Sometimes the children are ill-behaved, or grow sick, or the favorite child dies an untimely death; sometimes the servants are unfaithful, unruly, or lazy; the neighbors may be envious and deceitful, so that there is no peace with them; or God may allow misfortune, losses, and want to come

upon the family. But if the married couple live in peace and love with each other, all these trials lose their bitterness, and half the burden is taken away from them; one consoles the other, and they share each other's joys and sorrows. Elcana said to his wife, to console her when she was afflicted on account of her barrenness: "Anna, why weepest thou? And why dost thou not eat? And why dost thou afflict thy heart? Am I not better to thee than ten children?" (Kings 1 : 8.) Oh, fortunate state, I repeat, which, instituted by God, is maintained in constant love and unity! It is the household of which the Lord prophesies: "My people shall sit in the beauty of peace!" (Is. 32 : 18.) A household which resembles the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the house of peace, whose inhabitants are "the Angels of peace;" it is that dwelling which we wish to the departed in the prayer: "May they rest in peace."

But, alas! how many can with truth boast of this? How rare such a marriage nowadays! When the first few years of wedded life are over, if for a wonder unity lasts so long, what a great change then takes place with many! The devil, the sworn enemy of peace, seizes hold of every opportunity to sow the seeds of discord. Sometimes he makes use of an obstinate, vain, idle, impatient, peevish, and disobedient wife, to torment the poor husband; at other times he makes the wife miserable by means of a savage, passionate, ill-tempered, and drunken husband, or he incites some scandal-monger to stir up dissensions between husband and wife by his wicked tongue. Now, on such occasions, if there is not Christian virtue, mildness, and patience on both sides, and if neither wishes to give in to the other, what will be the result? Certainly unhappiness and misery, and a hell on earth.

II. Hell is an accursed place, where discord reigns supreme and the damned, hating each other like deadly enemies, spend a long eternity in howling, cursing and blaspheming, while they

torture each other mutually. "Where no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth" (Job 10 : 22).

See what a fearful picture I make to myself of the married state, when man and wife live in strife and discord continually. And I say continually, because it is a common thing for married people to be vexed with each other now and then, even for half a day, so that one will not speak to the other—and that is particularly the case in the first years of wedded life—it may happen to those who are very fond of each other, nay, excessive love is often the cause of it. Meanwhile, they must acknowledge that, although their quarrel is only trifling and by no means serious, yet it causes them bitter sorrow, so that each awaits the end of it with impatience, and is quite glad to make matters right again, so as to put an end to the uneasiness and torment. If they had to live continually on such bad terms with each other, what would you think of it, married Christians, who love each other? Would it not be an intolerable trial? From this you may see what a happiness it is for married people to be on good terms with each other, and what a misery it is if even the least misunderstanding comes between them. What a torment must it not be when, not love, but hatred and dislike, are the cause of disunion, when this disunion lasts, not for one or two days, but for the greater part of one's life, and is not confined to mere pouting and pettishness, but gives rise to continual quarrels, abuse, cursing, and swearing? What the husband likes, the wife detests; she wants one thing, he another; one ridicules the other's lowly birth, or poverty, or other natural defect; there is a constant storm of abuse going on on both sides: Would that I had never seen you! I wish you were dead, so that I might be rid of you! Alas! I need not tell you much about it; experience has taught you more than enough on this point! What a misery it must be when things have gone so far that curses and abuse lead daily to blows and ill-usage, so that the unfortunate couple live like

cat and dog together? Who can sufficiently explain the wretchedness of such a state? Is it not a kind of hell to have to live thus in the same house, and to live together till death?

It must have been a demon that inspired the tyrant Maxentius with the cruel idea of chaining a living man to a dead body until the insupportable stench should make life impossible. What more terrible torture could be thought of? The bare idea of it horrifies us; to rot away gradually, along with a putrefying corpse, is indeed a terrible thing; but it is a picture, too, of the married state, when two persons who are bound to live together till death hate and detest each other. Hence come those despairing sighs that are so often heard: Oh, unhappy me, when shall I be released? When may I hope for freedom? Wherever I turn, I find nothing but contradictions; everything is against me; every word I hear is an imprecation; everything I taste is gall; everything I feel is a thorn in my side! I cannot have one hour's peace!

What a countless number of sins arise from this discord, to increase the torments of the eternal hell when this temporal hell is at an end! I could weep tears of blood when I think of it, partly through pity for so many souls who are thus ruined forever, partly through sorrow at the many insults that are thus daily offered to God. For, from this discord comes *detraction*, inasmuch as the wife speaks ill of the husband, and the husband of the wife, through hatred and desire of revenge, and they try to ruin each other's character amongst neighbors, friends, and acquaintances by their constant complaints and fault-finding. Hence arises *the danger of adultery and other shameless crimes.* Hence comes *the secret joy and satisfaction at the misfortunes of another*, as well as *the deliberate desire* with which one wishes *the death of the other*, and even *the desperate resolve that suggests suicide* as the best means of putting an end to a misery that makes the unfortunate people curse the day on which they were born, and the day on which

they entered the married state. When this discord rules supreme, housekeeping is neglected, the husband tries to forget his sorrow by frequenting saloons and spending the little he has left in gambling and debauchery; the wife, through revenge or desperation, sits idly at home and allows everything to go to ruin, or takes to gambling and drinking to be revenged on her husband.

In such a household the children are not looked after, and they learn nothing good. And how could they? What good could they hope to learn in such an accursed school, which resembles hell itself, where children hear nothing from their parents but cursing and swearing, and see nothing but quarrelling and fighting? They will learn, indeed, but it will be to speak and act as their parents do; they will learn to behave to each other as they see their parents behaving; they will learn, when they grow up, to treat their father and mother with no greater respect than the latter show each other; and they will learn to lead a wicked, good-for-nothing life, and to bring up their own children as they themselves were brought up. And what a bad example they give to the whole neighborhood, which they disturb by their quarrelling and fighting? This, too, is often the cause that, to the great scandal of the community, the husband and wife must be separated, as far as cohabitation is concerned, by ecclesiastical authority, or, what is still worse, that they separate on their own authority, which they have no right to do, in order to escape an insupportable trial. Where there is such a spirit of discord, what must become of the service of God and the salvation of the soul? The continual quarrelling and bitterness prevent the morning and evening prayer; they are not capable of hearing Mass on days of obligation or of going to sermons as they ought; almost all their confessions and Communions are sacreligious and only add to their sins, because they will not give up the hatred and ill-will they bear each other, nor will they consent to give in to

one another, or to pardon each other from their hearts. And what have they then to look forward to but hell for all eternity, of which they have a foretaste already on earth? And there their lot will be to curse each other forever, after having lived in discord during their lives on earth.

The foundation of this misery is laid when parents *force their children*, or *persuade them*, to marry a certain person against their will. It is an old saying that an oath taken under pressure of necessity is offensive to God; now, where there is no love nor affection, what else can come of it but hatred, discord, and ill-will? This misery is caused, also, by marrying a person, *not for virtue's sake, but for riches*. In such a case, if the riches are less than they were first thought to be, if adversity comes on, there is an end to love, and discontent takes its place. Children, too, cause themselves misery by marrying without the knowledge and consent of their parents, or, what is worse, by embracing the first opportunity of marriage without first consulting God to know whether he calls them to that state; or by making use of unjust means to get married, and thus receiving the Sacrament in the state of mortal sin; or, as is, alas! only too common amongst those who are engaged, by committing sins of impurity with each other before marriage. In all these circumstances, since they neglect God and offend him when entering in what is in itself a holy state, what wonder is it that he does not bless them afterwards? What wonder is it that he refuses to give them the special graces which he has prepared for those who enter the married state according to his vocation and in his fear and love? And is it surprising, then, that, in the difficulties to which the married life is exposed, they should quarrel, fight, and be at variance with each other, and thus make for themselves a hell on earth, through their want of virtue?

Catholic young men and ladies who intend embracing the married state, see first of all whether God really calls you to that

state, and then be careful to enter on it in a holy manner and for a holy object, that it may not turn out unhappily for you, as a punishment for your sins.

But you, unfortunate married people, who live in discord, oh, how I pity you! For God's sake put an end to your misery at once! If you have grievously offended God before, or at the time of your marriage, learn to bear your cross with humility, knowing that you well deserve it, and ought to bear it with patience. Married people, cry out in your daily crosses: "Thou art just, oh, Lord," and thy judgment is right. Whatever has been the cause of discord to you, learn to give way to each other, to curb your anger, to forgive from your hearts, and to beg of God by earnest prayer to restore peace and harmony to you. Do you know what you must do? Go, both of you, and make a general confession, at least of that part of your lives which you have spent in discord; do not forget to accuse yourselves of all the confessions and Communions that you made while in that state, for they may have all been bad, on account of the want of true sorrow and purpose of amendment, since there was no sign of improvement in you after them, and then take each other's hand and renew your consent to your marriage. You must also ask each other's pardon for the many injuries and annoyances you have mutually caused, and make a firm resolution to forget the past, and to love each other truly, as if you were just married; with this resolution go to the table of the Lord, and humbly ask your Lord and God, who is present within you, to ratify your resolution and keep you united in love until death. Follow my advice, if you do not wish to go from a temporal to an eternal hell! Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Lent.

The Duty of Husbands to their Wives.

"*For he himself knew what he would do.*"—John 6 : 6.

If husbands as well as wives always knew the duties of their state and fulfilled them properly, what a blessing that would be! There would be then constant peace and unity, and temporal and spiritual prosperity in that state. But if one of the married couple is wanting in these duties, the foundation of contention and discord is already laid; just as in an organ, when one of the pipes is out of tune, the whole instrument is spoiled. If I were to ask the cause of the strife that reigns in many a household, what answer should I get? The husband would angrily throw the whole blame on the wife; the wife would declare herself as innocent as an angel, and would accuse her husband of being the only disturber of peace. My opinion is that they should both take part of the blame to themselves, for they either do not know their duty, or, knowing it, they do not fulfil it as they ought. I shall begin with the duty of husbands, since they ought to have more sense and prudence, and are more frequently to be blamed for the want of harmony in the married state.

I. The explanation of the duty of husbands to their wives.

II. Because that duty is not always properly fulfilled, much disunion is caused in the married state, and just reason for complaint is given to wives.

I. It is true that the husband is the *head of the wife.* St. Paul says: "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church" (Ephes. 5 : 23). It is true that the

husband is the *master of the house:* "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord" (Ephes. 5 : 22). Yet, it must be well understood that if the husband is the head the wife is not therefore to be trodden under foot, as is, unfortunately, only too often the case! Eve, our first mother, was formed by God from the body of her future husband, Adam; but from what part of his body? Not from the head, lest she should assume authority over him; nor from the feet, lest he should treat her in an unbecoming manner; but from a rib which is situated in the centre of the body, near the heart, to signify that he should love his wife as his helper and companion. The husband is certainly master in the house, but the wife is not, therefore, his servant, on whom he can impose all sorts of degrading offices at will; much less is she to be treated tyrannically, as if she were a slave. The authority of the husband over his wife does not consist in treating her haughtily and arrogantly as an inferior, but in caring for her with mildness and tenderness. It is not an authority of cruelty, but of love, and of the same kind of love as that with which the soul governs the body, as St. Paul says: "Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies" (Ephes. 5 : 28).

Such, married people, is the authority that must obtain among you: "Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies." "He that loveth his wife, loveth himself" (Ephes. 5 : 29). And if men act against that love, have not wives a right to complain, and to ask meekly: Husband, is that the way you treat your own body? Are you so cruel to your own members? Is that the way in which you curse and swear against yourself? For I must tell you, in God's name, that, according to St. Paul, you must treat me as you treat your own body. "For no man ever hated his own flesh" (Ephes. 5 : 33), or persecuted it. You must love me as you love yourself. "Let every one of you in particular love his wife as himself." If you tell me to do anything, I must obey; but you must command

me as the soul commands the body; that is to say, mildly and lovingly, and with a sincere desire to help me. You should not forget these words: "No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it and cherisheth it" (Ephes. 5 : 29). With what great care does not the soul look after the body, and provide it with everything necessary for nourishment, clothing, pleasure, and delight, so that it may eat, drink, sleep, and be clothed well? Does the body suffer an injury? How the soul is troubled thereat, and how it strives to ward off all hurt from the body and to protect it in every way! How rejoiced it is, on the contrary, if the body is in good health! In the same way men must love their wives. The latter must indeed contribute their share to the support of both; but that is principally the duty of the husband, who is bound to feed and clothe his wife and children decently. Adam alone, in punishment of his sin, received from God the command: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." As a general rule, it is only the wife who, on her marriage, must leave her home, and sometimes her country, and must sacrifice her beloved parents, brothers, and sisters, in order to follow her husband; so that she gives herself up altogether to his love and care as long as she lives. Is it not, then, your bounden duty to be to her as a father, mother, brother and sister; to care for her as a father, to replace by a fatherly tenderness the loving care of her parents, whom she abandoned for your sake, to rejoice with her in prosperity, to protect her from evil, and to care for her as you do for yourself? "Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies."

St. Paul makes another beautiful comparison when he says: "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church." And he adds: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered himself up for it" (Ephes. 5 : 25). Oh, what a perfect pattern of conjugal love! All the figures and symbols that the Prophets use in Holy Writ to denote Jesus Christ, represent him to us as a mild, patient, merci-

ful, peaceful, and loving Master, "whose yoke is sweet, and whose burden light." During his life on earth, how friendly and amiable he was with all! While living in Nazareth with his Mother Mary and his foster-father St. Joseph, the people of the town used to say, when they were troubled or annoyed about anything, "Let us go to the Son of Mary," that he may console us! How mild and patient he was with his Apostles when they were ignorant and rude fishermen; how he bore with their manifold faults and failings! With what love and even trustfulness he treated the wicked and sinful; so that the envious Pharisees who were eagerly looking for an opportunity of finding fault with him, could discover nothing to condemn in him, but that he was a friend and companion of sinners! And they tried thereby to render him contemptible in the eyes of the people, saying: "This man receives sinners, and eats with them." With what sweet words he addressed even his tormentors while they were scourging him, crowning him with thorns, mocking at and blaspheming him and nailing him to the Cross! How fervently he prayed in his death-agony to his heavenly Father to forgive them!

Married men, there you have a pattern of the love you should have for your wives: that is to say, not merely as long as they are young and beautiful, but also when they are old and feeble; not merely when they are strong and healthy, but also when they are sickly and decrepit; not merely when they are agreeable and pleasing in their manners, but also when they are ill-tempered, peevish, and subject to many faults; not merely when they are ready to obey the least word, but also when they are obstinate and stiff-necked and cause you much annoyance. Nor must you love them as some do, who say: "I have had two pleasant days in the married state: the first was my wedding day, and the second the day on which I lost my wife by death." You must love your wives constantly till death, bearing their faults and shortcomings with mildness and patience; you must

have a paternal care for them, and help them in all their necessities: in a word, you must love them, "as Christ also loved the Church." Oh, if all husbands were exact in fulfilling this duty, what would you wives then think? Would not many of you be better off than you are now? Would there not be more peace, union, and contentment in the married state than there now is? But, alas! it seems to me that I hear some, and perhaps many of you, sighing and lamenting to yourselves, and that, if you were allowed to do so, you would long since have interrupted me with your complaints. Well, let us hear them.

II. What are they?

1. Oh, God help me, if you were only in my house for a day and saw how my husband treats me! It is all very well to talk of the love that Christ has for his Church, and of his patience, mildness, and amiability! There is not a more cruel, harsh, and ill-tempered man to be found anywhere than my husband. How nice he was to me at first, before our marriage! I thought him an angel! But now I know him better; he has neither a friendly word nor a kind look for me the whole day long. If I say a word, he tells me at once to hold my tongue, and if I continue speaking, he storms at, and curses me. If anything goes wrong with him outside, I alone am to blame for it. If I sometimes commit a fault through carelessness or human frailty, he makes a terrible to-do about it! In fact, I do not know what to do, nor how I am to please him. The only return he makes for the services I try to render him is grumbling, abuse, and scolding. If I give way to tears and show how distressed I am, he treats me like a dog that barks at him in the street; nor is he satisfied if I laugh and enjoy myself. What am I to do? Ah, wretched me, in what a miserable state I am! How can we live in peace and union with each other? How can I have a proper love for such a man?

2. It is easy to talk of the love and care that the soul has for

the body (says another)! My husband is a regular miser; he never gives me a penny to buy anything for the house; I have not decent clothes to wear; he hardly gives me and the chidren enough to eat.

3. My husband, says a third, is a confirmed idler, who never does anything; he is a good-for-nothing who will not work; I have to support him, instead of being supported by him; I must provide him with food and clothing, which he ought to be able to provide me with. If I did not work so hard and had not the children's earnings to help me, we might all starve.

4. Even that is not so bad, says a fourth; I have a spendthrift, drunken husband, who not only brings neither food nor money into the house, nor supplies us with proper clothing, but even makes away with what I try to save for the children from my dowry; what we earn during the week he brings to the drinking-house on Sundays and holydays, and leaves me and the children to suffer hunger and thirst and to pine away in misery. When he comes home drunk he makes such a row in the house that we are all disgraced before the neighbors. How can there be any love and union under such circumstances?

5. It is easy to talk of loving as one's self, says a fifth. My husband does not treat me like a wife, but like a servant-maid, or like a worthless rag that is trodden under foot! I am not allowed to say anything either to the servants or the children in the house; if I tell them to do something, he at once gives them a contrary order, and I have to hold my tongue; he thus makes me quite contemptible before the servants, nay, even before my own sons and daughters, who can see for themselves every day that I have nothing to say in the house, so that they can do as they please without minding me at all Alas! how could I love such a man as I ought?

6. It is easy to speak of love, says a sixth, when you have, not a mild and patient master, but a cruel and overbearing tyrant, for a husband! It is an every-day occurrence for me to be

beaten and kicked and dragged about by the hair. If I remain quiet under such treatment, hoping thereby to move him to pity, he thinks I despise him and becomes still more ferocious; if I cry out and weep, he beats me still worse, so that the neighbors are often afraid that he will kill me; it seems, indeed, as if he were tired of me, and that he will not be easy until I am dead. May God help me!

7. It is easy to speak of love, thinks a seventh, for she dare not say it. My husband hates me and cannot bear the sight of me, although he likes others well enough. Would that I were esteemed even as much as my servant-maid. She has a great deal more to say in the house than I have, and many an insult I have to suffer that I must keep locked up in my breast. Can there be any trial greater than this? Is it possible for true love and harmony to exist under such circumstances?

8. It is easy to talk, says another, of loving one's wife as Christ loves the Church! I have a wicked, vicious husband, whom I cannot induce to practise his religion; he never goes to church or to a sermon; I never see him say an Our Father; he will never listen to anything good. God knows whether he ever goes to confession and Communion, even at Easter! If he would only allow me to serve God as I wish! He cannot bear to see me pious; he keeps me and the children from practising devotion; with the exception of Sundays and holydays, he will not allow me to go to church. If I wish to say my morning and evening prayers at home, I must do so stealthily, or he will snatch the prayer book or the rosary out of my hands! I am strictly forbidden to give alms, although we can well afford it; he curses and swears so fearfully that even the children are horrified and expostulate with him. He buys lost and stolen goods, and cares not whether it is right or wrong to do so; I must look on at that and dare not hope that I shall ever be allowed to make any restitution. I am afraid that he will thus drag me and the children down to hell with him. What

sort of peace or quiet can I have with a man like that?

I acknowledge that, if what you say is true, and your husbands alone are to blame for it—and I must believe you until I know something to the contrary—you are indeed very badly off, and I pity your miserable condition from my heart. How you are to act in such circumstances, and how you can at least perform your duty as far as peace, contentment, and union are concerned, I will tell you for your consolation next Sunday. Meanwhile, have patience! Seek consolation from God.

But *woe to you, wicked husbands*, who thus ill-treat your wives; who thus renounce the love that God so emphatically commands you to have for them; who make their lives so hard and so despairing! You burden yourselves with countless, terrible sins, make your houses dwelling-places of the devil, and turn the holy state of marriage into a hell of confusion and despair! You should act the part of a tender father to your wives, who for you left house and home, father and mother, brothers and sisters, and you treat them like galley-slaves who are driven with blows to their daily labor! They have given themselves up to you by the bond of marriage, that they may find help, comfort, and joy in your company during life, and now they find that they have fallen into the hands of murderers, who, if they do not kill them, at least embitter their lives and torture them daily, nor can any good Samaritan come to their assistance! God has placed you as head over your wives, that you may support, comfort, and assist them, and you are instead of that, their butchers, who try to take away their lives! For what difference does it make whether you put them to death at once by the sword or by poison, or wear away their lives by continual persecution, so that they are forced to long for death as a relief from their sufferings? You are joined together that you may help each other in the service of God, and bear the trials of your state so as to attain your last end, the kingdom of heaven, but you act the part of devils to your wives,

and try to bring them along with you from a temporal to an eternal hell!

But *woe to you!* How hateful and unbearable you make yourselves to the Lord God! He is a God of mildness and patience, a God of love and mercy, who has commanded us to love even our worst enemies and to treat them with mildness and kindness. How much more does he not command a husband thus to treat the wife that is given him by the Church, a wife that he takes with the promise to look upon her, not as a servant or a slave, but as the companion of his life, whom he is to love sincerely!

Woe to you again: "A hard heart shall fare evil at the last" (Eccles. 3 : 27). And if the meek, the peaceful, the merciful are blessed, then there is no surer sign of reprobation than to give way to a hard-hearted and cruel nature. The sentence is already pronounced by the Judge against such people: "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy" (James 2 : 13). If this is true of all those who do not perform the works of charity and Christian mercy to their neighbor, although the latter may not be in any way connected with them, how will it be with those who are hard and cruel to their own wives, with whom they ought to have one body, one spirit, one heart?

Let no one try to excuse himself by saying that he cannot bear with his wife's peevish humor. If you are not pleased to adapt yourself to her humor, why did you marry her? If you are so very sensitive that you cannot bear the least annoyance, why did you enter the married state? For, as a matter of course, something must now and then occur in that state which requires patience and meekness to be borne with. If your head is made of wax, you must not stand in the sun. I do not say that you must pass over all your wife's faults in silence, nor let her rule over you as she pleases; by no means. And well I can imagine, too, that the husband is not always to

have the whole blame, but that the wife must have her share also, in causing strife and disunion. It may often occur that she has to be warned and corrected; but the husband must correct his wife in the proper manner; not with shouting and roaring, not with abuse and foul language, nor with cursing and swearing; much less should he have recourse to beating and striking.

"Husbands, love your wives;" love them, "as your own bodies," which you are afraid to injure in the least, and which you care for and look after most diligently. Love them, "as Christ loves his Church," that is, at all times, in all circumstances, in sickness and health, in youth and old age, in riches and poverty, in fruitfulness and sterility, in prosperity and adversity, in constant peace and union with each other. If some of you have been hitherto harsh, cruel, and unmerciful to them, and are now ready to atone by a true and worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance, for the sins you have committed in a most inexcusable manner, against the express command of God, they are now ready to pardon you and forgive you from their hearts. Be reconciled again to each other, and replace your former harshness by a greater mildness, amiability, and love. Thus, Christian married people, must you love one another, until death separates you, and when you have both left this life an indissoluble bond of love will unite you again in the land of the living, where peace, repose, and union reign without disturbance and end. Amen.

Fifth Sunday of Lent.

The Conduct of Wives whose Husbands give them Cause for Disunion.

"They took up stones therefore to cast at him. But Jesus hid himself."

See the unreasonable anger and rage of the Jews on one side, and the wonderful mildness and patience of Jesus Christ on the other! They accuse him of having a devil! "Thou hast a devil!" He answers, meekly: "I have not a devil!" They prepare to stone him to death, and he, the Almighty God, who with a word could reduce them to nothing, gives way humbly before their rage and resentment and hides himself.

Now, in the Jews we have an example of the injustice of many husbands, who treat their wives contrary to the law of Christian charity. Poor wives! what advice can be given to you in such circumstances? Are you ready to answer your husbands in an unchristian manner, and say to them: "Thou hast a devil," or abuse and revile them, saying: Our husbands are worse than demons? Oh, no; you would not do yourselves any good by such conduct! And what are you to do, then? See how Jesus Christ your Saviour acts: patience and meekness were the arms that he used against the cruel Jews. If I could persuade you to follow the same course, then in a short time peace and union would be restored to you, or at least you would find your cross much easier to bear. At all events, I will now tell you—

How wives in such circumstances must behave, how they are to act, so as to preserve peace and quiet.

I know that this is a great trial for a wife to live continually with a passionate, angry, coarse, quarrelsome, and cruel husband. It is a great trial when, through avarice, he does not give her proper food, clothing, or care; or when, through idleness and laziness, he is unwilling to work, or spends everything in drinking and gambling. It is a great trial to live with a husband who, through hatred and aversion, does not allow her to say a word in the house, or to give any command, and so makes her contemptible in the eyes of the servants and children. A great trial when, in addition, she is ill-treated and beaten by him. A great trial to live with one who forgets conjugal fidelity, leads an impure life, and gives his love to strangers. A great trial to have an irreligious husband, who will not allow her to attend to her soul. And I must also confess that it requires great and rare skill, in such circumstances, to preserve peace, or at least to keep one's own peace of heart. *Yet the knot is tied which no one can loose;* the heavy burden of the married state must be borne, and what cannot be cured must be endured. Plutarch writes that, formerly, it was the custom in Africa for a bride to go, on the day after her wedding, to her mother-in-law to ask for a dish-cloth, which was refused to her with much scolding and abuse. And why was this, my dear brethren? In order that the bride, at the very beginning of her wedded life, might learn to bear the trials and annoyances of her state, and thus not be so easily put out if her husband said or did anything disagreeable to her; for, as it would not be the first annoyance she had to bear, so it would not be the last. With the same thought, Christian wives, must you arm yourselves, as often as your husbands give you trouble. You must summon up all your patience and think: What am I to do? I must bear the yoke for life; this is certainly not the last trial that I will have to bear. As we grow old together, the crosses will probably increase, so that I must humbly resign myself to God's holy will. St. Paul says, speaking of those

who intend to marry: "Nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh" (1 Cor. 8 : 28). And this advice is good for all wives in general. Now let each one hear how she is to act in the different trials already mentioned.

1. You have, then, as you say, a passionate, quarrelsome husband, who gives you neither a friendly word nor a kind look; who must have his way in everything; who curses and abuses you for the least fault. What are you to do? you ask. Listen: If you wish to preserve contentment and peace of heart, you must first take the best meaning out of everything; you must not imagine that your husband's cross looks and harsh words come from hatred and aversion toward you, for there are men who are stern and serious in their manner, and harsh and unkind in their speech, yet they are not less loving at heart; nay, the harsher their words, the deeper, often, is their love. Think that their unkindness is caused by some bodily indisposition to which one man is more subject than another; or by some annoyance caused him elsewhere which he cannot easily forget. The master of a house has too many things to think of and to look after, to be always able to appear with a smiling face. Think that the cursing and abuse come from an evil habit, as is unfortunately the case with most people, whose mouths are constantly filled with that hellish language, and that therefore he does not mean it seriously. If this anger comes from a want of conjugal affection, and from hatred and aversion toward you, then try to find out the cause of this hatred; if you discover it in yourself, oh, do your best to remove it! There is no better way to extinguish a fire than to remove all inflammable material: take away the cause of his anger, and his aversion will soon cease, and you will be again united in the bonds of love.

2. Again, no matter what is the cause of your husband's ill-temper, be careful, above all, not to answer him back angrily, or contradict him, or give him curse for curse, abuse for abuse.

You must hold your tongue, and give way in everything, until his anger is over; if you make any answer, let it be in gentle words. Forget not the Proverb of Solomon (15 : 1): "A mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury;" and as even the meekest are aroused to impatience and anger by contradiction, so there is no nature so rough as not to be tamed when it meets nothing but patience and meekness.

3. Besides using loving words, show him that you have a real affection for him by doing all you can to please him, by having his food ready, looking after his clothing, and otherwise attending to his comforts as best you can. The world has before now seen fierce lions caressing those who drew a thorn out of their paws. There is no one so boorish and ill-tempered as not to be overcome and tamed at last by kind offices. Try that plan with your husband, and see whether he will not be kinder to you after a time. And if, as is very unlikely, your efforts are a failure, then have patience! Offer up your trials to God. He will know how to change your husband's heart.

4. What am I to do? asks another. My husband is such a miser that he never gives me a penny, nor supplies me with proper clothing, so that I am ashamed to go out and appear amongst my equals, who are far better dressed than I. He hardly allows me sufficient food, or what he does give is of the worst quality, such as very poor people have. This is all the harder for me to bear since I was accustomed to better things in my father's house, and we could fare much better now if my husband were not so mean and niggardly. The servants in other houses are better off than I and my children; I find that so hard to bear that I cannot live in peace and love with him.

I am well aware of it; it is a hard case enough with poor people who have to toil and labor for their daily bread; their extreme poverty makes them deserving of pity; but it is harder still for a respectable woman to be reduced to such straits through sheer avarice that she has barely enough to live upon.

But if you cannot make matters better, what will you do? Is that a reason for destroying the peace and concord of the married life? By no means; if you did so, you would make your cross heavier, instead of lighter. Think, therefore, in order not to lose your contentment, that it is due solely to the goodness of God that you are more wealthy than others. How many Saints have had far worse food, clothing, and bed than you, although you could have had, and deserved, far better?

As far as your clothing is concerned, if it is not according to your taste or in the fashion, if others of your rank and condition are better dressed than you, it does not follow that their dress is suited to their station or to yours. How many are there who dress above their station? It would be well for most husbands if they were far more economical in this point, and they would put a stop to excessive luxury in dress, and avert ruin from their families. Although your dress is not according to the fashion, still God knows you in it, and men, too, will learn to know you, perhaps all the better. You will not, on that account, be thought poorer or richer than you really are; but by being clad in that way, you will certainly be much richer than you seem to be. Finally, as far as food and clothing are concerned, it is not always niggardliness on your husband's part if he is sparing with regard to them; it is often a useful and necessary economy. Perhaps there are debts that he has to pay, of which he does not wish to speak to you for fear of distressing you, and he is obliged to reduce his expenditure in order to meet them. Or he may act thus through a fatherly foresight for your interest, that you and your children may have enough to live on comfortably after his death.

5. How am I to act so as to preserve love and union with my husband, who is so idle and lazy that he earns nothing, or so stupid that he does not know how to earn anything; or so old and feeble that he cannot work, and leaves the whole care of the house on my shoulders, so that I must work the whole day to

support him and the children, although it is his duty to support me? Listen: If your husband is unable to work, or knows not how to earn anything, then the difficulty solves itself; he cannot help himself and is not to be blamed. But you must never reproach him with idleness or stupidity, especially before strangers. But if he refuses to work through sheer laziness, what am I then to do? Console yourself with the thought that it is better for your own and your children's eternal and perhaps temporal welfare to have only a little, than to have much. If your husband were industrious and diligent you would certainly be much better off as far as temporal wealth is concerned; but perhaps he would then force you to work harder and would be niggardly in supporting you. Or you might go to unnecessary expense through vanity, and so would have less at the end of the year than you have now, and you and your children would be less able to endure the hardships of poverty, because you would be used to an easy and comfortable life. At least you ought to be satisfied (since a man cannot have every perfection at once), even if your husband is idle, lazy, and good-for-nothing, if he lives in peace and quiet and is always friendly and loving to you. Oh, if every wife had that good fortune! How good would they not all be to their husbands!

6. Ah, says another, I wish my husband was like that; he comes home drunk every Sunday and holyday, and sometimes during the week also, and makes away with all our savings. How can I live in peace and love with him? The best advice I can give you is to take every opportunity of showing how abominable and degrading the vice of drunkenness is; but you must be careful how and when you do so. Most wives do it when their husbands come home drunk at night. That is not the time for reproach or exhortation; there is no use in saying anything when you will not be listened to; for then it is not reason, but strong drink, that is uppermost with your husband.

While he is in that state you should only give him kind words, and be friendly with him. But afterwards you can find an occasion of expostulating with him, when you think the drunken fit is over, or when you see that he has been impressed by a sermon, and has been to confession or to communion, or when he is more friendly than usual with you. Then entreat him with kind words to give up that vice, by which he places his soul in danger of hell; to take more care of his health, which he is ruining, and of his life, which he is shortening; to be more mindful of his honor and reputation, for he brings disgrace on himself among his neighbors and acquaintances by his drunken habits, and to have pity on his poor children, to whom he gives such a bad example and whom he is likely to reduce to beggary. But be careful not to get vexed if he sometimes takes a drop too much at home with others who visit him, although he may spend more than you like, for it is better to bear with a lesser evil than to run the risk of a greater one. If your husband sees in you a constant patience, friendliness, and love toward himself, and you unite fervent prayer to your gentle reproaches, he will enter into himself at last, acknowledge how dreadful the vice is to which he is addicted, break himself of it more and more, and finally give it up altogether.

7. Still more to be pitied are those unhappy wives whose husbands beat and ill-treat them as if they were servants or slaves. How can they live in peace and quiet? But I must ask you one question. Are you thus ill-treated because you are obstinate or disobedient, or on account of other serious faults, or is it simply because your husband is cruel and unmerciful by nature, although you are quite innocent? If the former is the case, then you must acknowledge that you are to blame, although husbands are guilty of sin when they make use of such cruel punishments, for Christian charity and conjugal love should suggest to them a milder form of chastisement and one less likely to interfere with domestic peace and

harmony. Correct the fault that you know to be displeasing to your husband, although you may sometimes think you are in the right; be careful not to talk or act in such a way as to incur that ill-treatment again; try to please him and satisfy him in every way, for even the most savage beasts are tamed by kindness.

8. If you suffer innocently, and find that all your patience, mildness, kindness and love cannot save you from ill-treatment, then your innocence itself will be your greatest consolation in the sight of God, if you keep in his friendship, and remember that he who is innocence itself suffered the shameful death of the Cross for you, and you will be ready to suffer anything, even undeservedly, in order to be more like your crucified Redeemer. This inward consolation of the heart will more than repay you for your bodily sufferings. Act like Christ when the Jews took up stones to throw at him: "But Jesus hid himself." Keep out of the way, and out of the house, if you can, until the storm is over. In that manner, if you cannot have peace with your cruel husbands, you will at least have peace with yourselves, and, what is most important of all, you will be at peace with God.

9. You must also follow the same plan, in order to live in peace and quiet, who have a wicked, irreligious husband, by whom, as you say, you are kept away from your religious duties. It is true that he can now and then prevent you from the outward practise of devotion, but he can never force you against your will to give up real interior piety and the true love of God, no matter how much he may try to do so; he may keep you busy at home every day during the week, so that you cannot go to church as you would wish, nor practise your usual devotions; but you must be satisfied; the fulfilment of the divine will does not consist in those things, and they make a great mistake who imagine that they cannot be pious nor do any good unless they spend the greater part of their time in the

church and in the outward practise of devotion. No; the real, true, and genuine piety and devotion of the Christian wife consists in working diligently at home, fulfilling her husband's wishes in all things lawful and bringing up her children in the fear and love of God; it is that which God requires of you before anything else; that is your bounden duty, and that you can do, although you are often prevented from going to church. Your husband may hinder you from saying vocal prayers at home, or he may disturb you when saying them, but he cannot, no matter how he tries, keep you from inward prayer and union of the heart with God; he cannot hinder you from often having holy thoughts, making pious ejaculations, and often renewing your good intention; and that kind of piety is much better and more pleasing to God than long prayers that you read out of your book in the church. During your work, then, and while performing your domestic duties, keep yourself always in the presence of God; cry out to him frequently: "May thy holy will be done, oh, Lord! Give me patience under my trial!" And God will hear your prayer as well as if you made it on your knees before the altar. Every place is pleasing to God; he is always ready to give audience. He looks more to the hearts and the good will of his servants and handmaids, than to their works. Such was the way in which St. Catherine of Siena acted when her parents kept her employed in the kitchen, in order to put a stop to her devotions; the parents lost their trouble, for Catherine, even when a kitchen-maid, advanced rapidly in piety and virtue.

But if your husband tries to keep you away from pious works of obligation, or to lead you into sin, you must not and cannot obey him; you must firmly and earnestly give him the same answer that St. Dorothy gave the emperor, when he told her to renounce the true God and sacrifice to idols: "What," said she, undismayed, "the Emperor of heaven and earth has told me to serve him alone, and I must obey him rather than you." Such

also should be your determination, Christian wives, at all times, even if your husbands raved and stormed at you like demons. In that way you will be martyrs for virtue and for the glory of God, and you will be of the number of those of whom Christ says: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matth. 5 : 10). Continue in the fear of God with a childlike confidence, and love him with all your hearts; that is the best and surest means of converting a wicked husband, and bringing him to a better mode of life; as the Apostle says: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife" (1 Cor. 7 : 14).

Finally, Christian wives, whatever trials you have to suffer from your husbands, do all you can to be peaceful and contented as far as yourselves are concerned. You will succeed in this if you only know how to give way meekly, and to bear every cross that you cannot avoid, with constant patience and resignation to the will of God. St. Augustine gives us an example of this in his own mother, Monica: She, as he relates, was very harshly treated by Patritius, her husband, yet she never gave him a cross word nor complained of him to others, and thus she brought him over, little by little, not only to be good and kind to her, but also to abandon heathenism and become a Christian. If you are not so successful, remember, at all events, that you have a fine opportunity of increasing your merit in the sight of God. There is no art required to love those who love us, to be obedient to, pleased, and satisfied with one who is all kindness and goodness to us. But to live in peace and love with a husband who often contradicts and annoys you is a sign of real heroic virtue. Remember that this is the ladder by which you have to ascend to heaven. According to the words of St. Paul: "The momentary and light weight of our tribulations worketh for us an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4 : 17). Amen.

Easter Sunday.

THE CHILDLIKE CONFIDENCE WITH WHICH EVERY ONE OUGHT TO ABANDON HIMSELF TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

"*They come to the sepulchre.*"—Mark 16 : 2.

Who were they who went out so early in the morning? Mary Magdalen, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, all weak women. Where are they going to? "To the sepulchre," in which Christ was buried, whose very Name was hated by the Jews, whom even courageous men, nay, even his own Apostles and disciples were afraid to defend, lest they should be seized by the Jews and put to death. They knew that there was a guard before the sepulchre to prevent any one from entering. Why were they going? "That coming they might anoint Jesus." But how could they do that, because they could not drive away the guard, nor roll back the heavy stone that closed the entrance of the sepulchre? And they were well aware of that also: "Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? For it was very great." Considering all these things, might not their journey seem a fruitless one? And yet they went on with courage and confidence, knowing that he who, although dead, was the Almighty God, could remove all difficulties from their way, so that they might fulfil their intention. Nor were they disappointed, for when they came to the grave all the soldiers were gone, the stone was rolled back, and, what was still farther beyond their hopes, they were the first to hear of the Resurrection of Christ. See; what no man

dared to do was done by those weak women, who, in spite of the difficulties that surrounded them, put their confidence in God, and went on boldly. Oh, how their example shames our pusillanimity, our want of faith and confidence in God! How it condemns our inordinate and excessive cares, anxieties, fears, and uneasiness, our useless troubles and apprehensions. Let us, therefore, consider that there is

nothing more reasonable, or more conducive to true happiness, than to abandon ourselves with childlike confidence to divine providence.

Where could I place all my hope and confidence, to whom could I more reasonably intrust myself and all belonging to me, if not to him who has a perfect knowledge of me and my condition, who knows exactly what my wants and necessities are, who has also the power of providing me with all I want, and guarding me from all harm, at all times, and what is still more, whose love and good-will I can always be certain of, knowing that he desires and seeks only to do me good, and to arrange everything for my greatest happiness, both of soul and body? Oh, if I find such a Guardian, I need have no further care! I can rest quietly and allow him to deal with me as he thinks fit, certain that no evil can happen to me, and that nothing I undertake can turn out badly.

But where can you find such a one? You may search the whole world through and you will not find any one who possesses those three qualities. Christ our Lord, when exhorting us to have no care for the morrow, nor for food, drink, or clothing, but to place all our confidence in our heavenly Father, intrusting ourselves and all we have to his providence, uses these brief but impressive words: "For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things" (Matt. 6 : 32). God knows all your wants; you need not fear that he will forget them. Be assured, then, that he can provide for and help you

in your misery. Your Father knows and can do all these things; you cannot doubt, therefore, on his goodness and love; you must believe that he arranges everything for your greater good.

God knows everything that concerns us—what we want. What could be hidden from him? St. Paul says: "All things are naked and open to his eyes" (Heb. 4 : 13); all, without exception, great and small. He cares for me and for each one in particular, as if he were occupied with me alone. He cares for the whole world as he would for one individual. Go where you will, do as you please, let what may happen to you, whether you are in joy or in sorrow, the eye of God always follows you, in all places, in all circumstances. His wisdom "reacheth from end to end" (Wis. 8 : 1). It knows and comprehends all things, not merely those that are present, but also those that are past, and what will happen and can happen for all eternity; everything is clear and manifest to the eye of God, and is arranged by his providence with the utmost wisdom. Be comforted, then; God sees all your wants; "his eyes are open upon all the ways of the children of Adam" (Jerem. 32 : 19). He knows more of your wants than you do yourselves.

The same all-wise God is more careful of you than you can be of yourselves. When you are asleep at night the eye of God is watching over you for your greater good. Sometimes, when you sit down quietly, not suspecting any evil, the hand of God is engaged in averting some misfortune that was about to happen to you, of which you knew nothing. Do you know how many hairs you have on your head? No. Yet God knows it, and has counted them exactly, as Christ says: "The hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matth. 10 : 30). "But a hair of your head shall not perish" (Luke 21 : 18), without his knowledge. Not a flake of snow is blown about by the wind that God does not know of it, nay, he has even decreed that a particular flake should fall upon you, and not on any one

else. In a word, even the meanest thing on earth is under the constant care of divine providence. Therefore, if God knows and cares for even the least thing, that to our mind is of no importance whatever, how much more careful will he not be of his reasoning creatures, whom he has made to know, love, and possess him for all eternity? How much less likely is he to leave them without what is necessary for the support of their bodies, the comfort of their minds, and for the eternal salvation of their immortal souls? And what a consolation it is for me, and for all men, to think and say with David: "But I am a beggar and poor; the Lord is careful for me" (Ps. 39 : 18). He knows and cares for everything that belongs to me. Certainly, that is reason enough to abandon myself to him with childlike confidence.

He who believes in the one true God must adore him as the Almighty Lord, whom nothing can withstand, to whose will all things must be subject. As long as I am under his care and protection, who can harm me, or what can be wanting to me? For he who made this earth out of nothing by a single word, can he not provide a dwelling for me in some corner of it? He who placed bounds for the raging sea that it dare not pass, he who restrains the winds and makes them blow, how, when, and where he wills, can he not protect me against the enemies of my soul and body? He who causes the mighty oak to grow from a small acorn, can he not find the means of providing for me in my poverty? He who protected the three youths in the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lions' den, can he not save my life from dangers that are not near so great? He who fed thousands in the desert with a few loaves, can he not find bread enough for me, and for you and your children? He who has so richly adorned the earth, can he not provide me with clothing? Therefore, I think and say, with fresh courage and firm confidence in his providence: "The Lord is the protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 26 : 1.)

But, you say, we know all that. God knows and can do all things; he knows how to help us, nor does he want the power to do so; but he does not wish to do so, as we often find to be the case, when he leaves us in trials and troubles without consolation and help. Christians, where is your confidence? Where is your faith? He who knows your wants is your Father. "There is no one so good and so fatherly," no one who is more concerned for the wants and necessities of his children, no one who has a greater love for his own flesh and blood than God has for us, for whom he sacrificed his only Son. Nay, the name, father, is not sufficient to express the tenderness of his love for us; he takes the name of mother also. Hear what he says: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isai. 49 : 15). So great is the fatherly, nay, more than motherly care that the God of love takes of his children! Is it likely that this God has changed his heart toward us? Are we not rather his chosen children, whom he has specially commanded to call him Father?

But we must be good children; our chief care should be to lead a good and Christian life; to obey his law exactly; to use moderate, natural diligence according to our state, in temporal things; to have recourse to him always, and then to allow him to do with and for us as he pleases, with the firm assurance that nothing will be wanting to us. Oh, what a quiet and happy life we could have if we were not wanting in that child-like confidence! Hear how God himself complains, that we trust in him so little: "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns," and yet, "your heavenly Father feedeth them." See how unjustly you accuse your heavenly Father, oh, ye of little faith, with your childish fear and inordinate anxiety on acount of your wants! He feeds the birds of the air, the young ravens and carrion birds even, for your use and benefit. "Are not you of much more

value than they?" Are you afraid that such a Father will neglect you? No, be not anxious; no matter who you are, no matter what danger threatens, what enemy persecutes, what want oppresses you, abandon yourself to God, as children do to their loving father; throw yourself in his arms; he will not turn away from you nor abandon you, nor leave you without comfort in your distress, for he is your Father.

If the name of father, which takes away all fear and anxiety from children, is not enough to inspire you with confidence in God, then, at least, you must believe his own words, for he is a God of truth, whom as Christians you are bound to believe. No one can bind himself more solemnly to do or to give anything than God has bound himself to help in all dangers those who hope in him, and to give them what they desire. We find hundreds of such promises in the Holy Scripture, and they are repeated so impressively, that he who doubts them must necessarily accuse a most faithful God of treachery. To save time, I will quote only a few of them. "Ye that fear the Lord, hope in him, and mercy shall come to you for your delight. Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded." If there be any such let him come forward: "For who hath continued in his commandment, and hath been forsaken? or who hath called upon him, and he despised him?" No such person can be found in the whole world: "For God is compassionate and merciful....and he is a protector to all that seek him in truth" (Eccles. 2 : 9-13). "Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him, and on them that hope in his mercy to deliver their souls from death, and feed them in famine" (Ps. 32 : 18). "Be not solicitous, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things" (Matth. 6 : 31).

Ah, Christians, how is it that we are so wanting in confidence in God? We believe that there is one God, in whom there are

three Persons; that Jesus Christ, God and man, is present under the appearances of bread and wine; and many other mysteries, too, that far surpass our understanding, we believe as firmly as if we saw them with our own eyes. Why? Because God has revealed them; that alone is enough for us, for we are certain that God cannot deceive us. But it is the same God who assures us that he keeps a watchful eye on all our wants, so as to provide for us; that every one who hopes in him will not be confounded; that there is no danger or necessity in which he is not willing to help those who have recourse to him with confidence in his goodness. Now, this is not less worthy of belief than the mystery of the Blessed Trinity; God can no more deceive us in this point than in the others; why, then, should we not believe it firmly? We trust even an honorable man, who pledges his word and makes us a promise; why should we not trust God, who cannot go back of his word like men; who can always fulfil it, which men are often unable to do; who would not be God if he deceived us and did not keep his promise? Why, I ask again, do we not trust him? Why have we so little confidence in him?

And, what is worst of all, we violate God's commandments for fear that if we served him faithfully we should suffer some temporal loss. How many use unjust means, how many have recourse to underhand trickery to maintain themselves in their state, as if we were obliged to be at a loss by always doing what is right! How many use sinful means to gain even a just lawsuit, as if God could not gain it for them, or replace their loss otherwise if they are unsuccessful! How many shrink from fulfilling the law of Christian charity and mercy and giving generous alms, lest their children should be at a loss thereby; as if God could not provide for them, although he has promised that "he that giveth to the poor shall not want" (Prov. 28 : 27).

And this is the reason why God, wearied of his own goodness

to you, sometimes leaves you without help in your wants, sickness, misfortunes, persecutions, or poverty, and allows you to moan and lament in vain, while he pretends not to hear you, either because you are not as pious and zealous in his service as you should be, or because you have not a childlike confidence in him, and place your hopes in creatures alone. For that very reason, I say, you get neither help nor consolation from him, and therefore things do not prosper with you, because he wishes to show you that without him all your labor and trouble are worthless. "Woe to you that are faint-hearted, who believe not God; and therefore you shall not be protected by him. Woe to you that have lost patience, and that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways" (Ecclus 2 : 16). As a just punishment of your want of confidence, all help will be denied you; your business will not prosper, you will not escape that danger, no matter what you do, you will not recover from that sickness; and that because you do not place your hopes in God, but elsewhere. Manage matters more prudently, and confidently commit yourselves and all your affairs to him who alone knows how to help you, who alone can and will help you, casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you (1 Pet. 5 : 7). What a consolation for him who can think and say to himself: I am certain that God knows what I want and what is good for me; I am certain that he can arrange everything for my greater good; I am certain, too, that he loves me more than a father loves his only child, and that he will arrange everything for my greater good! What need have I, then, to trouble myself? What can disturb my peace? No matter how things go with me, well or ill, in the judgment of the world, I know that my loving Father has so decreed for me, and, therefore, I am certain that it is all for the best. Confiding in him, I cannot be disturbed by any misfortune, danger, illness, or want. If temptations try to lead me into sin, "I will look toward the Lord." If poverty and

want oppress me, "I will look toward the Lord." If I am tried by sickness, "I will look toward the Lord." Whatever may be my circumstances: "In thee, oh, Lord, have I hoped; let me never be put to confusion" (Ps. 70 : 1).

First Sunday After Easter.

THE DUTY OF WIVES TO THEIR HUSBANDS.

"*Peace be with you.*"—John 20 : 20.

This was the greeting of Jesus Christ to his disciples whenever he appeared to them after his Resurrection: "Peace be with you." He knew well how much depends on peace. Christian married people, peace be with you! That is the best and most excellent thing I can wish you. For there is nothing more necessary, especially in the married life, than peace, union, and constant love with and for each other. There is no doubt husbands most frequently disturb this peace by not performing their duty as they ought. But it is not always the husbands who disturb peace, love, and union; very often the wives do that also, because they do not know their duty toward their husbands, or do not fulfil it properly. To-day

I. I will explain the duty of wives to their husbands.

II. I will show that on account of the frequent neglect of this duty, much misunderstanding and disunion are caused in the married life, and further, I will explain how husbands must act in order to preserve peace in such circumstances.

I. "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord" (Ephes. 5 : 22). Christian wives, although your husbands owe

you love and fidelity as their companions, yet they are the masters of the house, they have authority over you, and you must be subject to them. And this is the first duty toward your husband which the married state imposes on you, namely, *submissive obedience.*

1. The reason of this obedience is twofold; *it is according to the natural law, and it is a punishment of original sin.* The natural subjection of the wife to the husband is founded on the superiority of the male sex over the female. It is in accordance with reason that where there is question of authority amongst two individuals, the more excellent should have it. Our first father, Adam, came immediately from the hands of God, who himself formed the clay into a body and breathed the soul into it. Eve was made from a rib of Adam. Now, it is an axiom of jurists that a building belongs to the owner of the ground, as well as whatever crops the ground produces. God has given more of the wisdom, prudence, foresight, and fortitude that are necessary to govern to man than to woman (although there are many women who are much more clever than men). It is therefore natural and reasonable that, if one of the married pair is to govern the other, the weaker in understanding should submit to the stronger, and therefore the wife must obey her husband.

In addition to this natural law of subjection, which would also have been observed in Paradise in the state of innocence, there is still another which God imposed upon wives *in punishment of original sin.* Eve was the first to allow herself to be deceived by the serpent and to eat the forbidden fruit in the hope of becoming like to God and of being worthy of adoration. Nor was she content therewith: by her sweet and flattering words she induced her husband to follow her example and transgress the divine command, and thereby she brought destruction on us all. Therefore God said to her: "*In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children*" (Gen. 3 : 16). That was *in pun-*

ishment of her sin. And immediately afterwards she heard the words: "*Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee*" (Gen. 3 : 16). *That was because she had led him into sin.* If Eve before the fall was subject to her husband, according to the natural law, how could the same submission be imposed upon her as a punishment for her sin? Before the fall she was subject to her husband as to a gracious prince, but after it she had to obey him as her master: He shall have dominion over thee. So also St. Paul: "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord." Now, what is the difference between the government of a prince and that of a master? A prince commands his subjects according to the general law, and in matters pertaining to the general welfare; a master commands his subjects how, when, and where he pleases. "Such is my will, such my command;" and if you ask why: "My will is sufficient reason."

But how, in what manner, are they to obey? With fear and reverence, answers St. Paul: "Let the wife fear her husband" (Ephes. 5 : 33). Not, indeed, with a servile fear, but with a childlike respect, which springs from love, and in virtue of which a wife should dread contradicting her husband's will in the least thing. How far must this obedience extend? Lest I should say too much, hear St. Paul again: "As the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things" (Ephes. 5 : 24). In what? "In all things." There you have it all in a word. In all things, provided that nothing is commanded against the will of God. Otherwise there is no exception; they must obey in all things, even against their will, and in disagreeable things. If the husband wishes the wife to hold her tongue, she must obey; if he tells her to remain at home, she must obey; if he commands her to return at a fixed hour, she must obey; if he desires her to undertake a certain work, to dress in a certain manner (provided it is lawful), she must obey; in all things she must submit to the good will and

pleasure of her husband. This authority of the husband is even ratified by God to such an extent that God himself almost yields his own right in favor of it. For instance, the wife makes a vow to go on a pilgrimage, or to have so many Masses said, or to give so much to the poor, or to fast on certain days in the week, and so forth, the husband can say: No, I will not allow it; you must remain at home; you must not have Masses said, nor give any more alms; you must eat and drink as usual. And if she gets scrupulous and says: But I have made a vow to do these things, he can answer: I release you from the vow, and free you from all such obligations. But you are not the Pope, to be able to absolve me from a vow! Although I am not the Pope, yet the Sacrament of Matrimony has given me power and right to free you from your vow. And such is the general doctrine of theologians. Such great authority has the husband over his wife!

Ah, Christian wives, do not get angry at what I say. If you were only constant in the practice of that obedience, you could not find a better means of having the supremacy that you perhaps long for and desire in your hearts; for in that way you would in a short time make your husbands subject to you, and rule over them as you please, so that, even if God had not commanded you to obey, and St. Paul had never said a word about it, your own advantage and profit ought to suggest it to you. A young wife went to an old, experienced, and clever man, to ask him how she should live in the married state so as to be always happy. The wise old man answered: "If you wish to rule over your husband, you must obey him," and do what he tells you; "for a good wife rules her husband by being obedient to him."

If there was ever a wife who had authority, it was Livia Augusta, who ruled Cæsar, her husband, the ruler of the world. How did she manage that? She told it herself to an intimate friend: "By being very reserved, and by doing all that Augustus

wished." In the same way Clotilde, the wife of Clovis, king of France, obtained authority over her husband and over the whole kingdom; she always obeyed the king with the greatest humility. Whenever he asked her to do anything, her answer was: "My lord, I have left *my will* in my father's house; here in France I have no will but that of my husband." And then Clovis used to say: "I have a wife of great understanding and excellent memory, but she has *no will*." In that way she brought matters so far, that once on his return from a battle in which he had been victorious, he publicly declared himself a Christian, and said: "Clovis has conquered his enemies, and Clotilde has conquered Clovis. I now renounce heathenism and embrace the religion that Clotilde has taught me by her example." Christian wives, is not that a fine way of gaining authority over your husbands? "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."

2. The first obligation brings with it a second, namely, inviolable fidelity and helpfulness in domestic management. Certainly a man is obliged to support his wife and children, but the wife is not to remain idle on that account; she must help her husband according to his desire, and both must take their part in the duties and business of their state. Generally speaking, it is the man's duty to attend to out-door business, while the wife has to look after the house, to care for the children, and bring them up carefully in a Christian manner, to see that the servants do their work properly, to prepare her husband's meals in due time, and to look after all the other details of domestic management. If she is careless in this respect and neglects her business, or if she buys things or gives them away, or makes and receives presents, or otherwise arranges matters according to her own will and pleasure, she would act contrary to the fidelity she owes her husband, who is lord and master of the house, and whom she is bound to help by keeping his house for him as he wills, and not otherwise.

3. Finally, as the husband is bound to love his wife from his heart, so also *must she reciprocate this love;* and she must not only do so really in her heart, but also show it outwardly in her behavior. Hence she must always meet him with the greatest affection and kindness; she must contribute as much as possible to his repose, consolation, pleasure, and enjoyment; she must look after his health, as she would after her own; she must attend to him, if he is weak and sickly; she must console him in sorrow and affliction; she must be careful of his good name, honor, and reputation, so that he can see by all her words and actions that she loves him sincerely as she loves herself. There are many examples of this conjugal affection on the part of wives related in the Sacred Scriptures: for instance, Michol, the wife of David, when she heard that the soldiers of her father Saul were seeking him, immediately let him down by a rope from a window of the house, and dressed up a wooden image and placed it in the bed, so as to deceive the soldiers and give her husband more time to escape.

The story of the women in Weimberg in Bavaria is well known. When Guelph, Duke of Bavaria, was besieged by Emperor Conrad III., with a great force, and was on the point of having his town burnt down, the women of the town sent a petition to the emperor, and asked him to allow them, since they had nothing to do with the war, to leave the town unharmed and to bring with them whatever each one could carry. Their petition was granted. The emperor came to see them leave the town, fully believing that they would bring away nothing but their clothes and a few domestic utensils; but what was his surprise when he saw all, from the duchess down to the lowliest matron, carrying their husbands on their backs out of the town, through the camp. This sight drew tears from the emperor, so that he spared the town and offered peace and friendship to the duke. I think, my dear brethren, that if the same chances were offered to wives in our days, under the same

circumstances, many husbands would have to remain at home, or their wives would not carry them far without letting them fall, through want of proper love and affection.

II. It is intolerable for an inferior to usurp authority that does not belong to him, and to try to command his superior. It is unjust when one can expect neither consolation nor help from a person who is bound to assist him in bearing his burden. And it is a most painful thing when one is despised, neglected, and hated by a person from whom he has a right to expect a tender love and affection. Such is the wretchedness and misery of many husbands who have bad wives. Wives are bound to be subject to their husbands, and to obey the least sign, but, to the husband's great disgrace, how often do we not hear that the wife rules the house! Sometimes this happens through the husband's cowardice and timidity, but more frequently still from the obstinacy, pride, and arrogance of the wife, who refuses to obey, and insists on having her way in everything; otherwise she fills the house with murmurs, complaints, abuse, and curses. She goes out when and wherever she likes, remains away as long as she pleases, and follows her own inclination with regard to meals and other details of housekeeping. Is not that enough to exhaust any man's patience?

1. If the wife stops at home, as all decent and pious women should, unless the divine will or necessity requires otherwise, she is often of no more use in housekeeping than a silver goblet that is placed for show on the sideboard. Brought up idle and vain by her parents, she remains so in the married state, and brings up her daughters like herself. Her hands are too soft for her to work in the kitchen, in the garden, or in her room; these occupations are unfit for such a grand lady! She sleeps till late in the day, spends a long time before the looking-glass, receives visits and is glad of the chance to do so, goes to tea-parties, and wastes her time in idle amusements which do not

bring a penny into the house. If she has none of these things to pass away the time with, she pesters her poor husband, who has serious matters to think of, with her vain and frivolous chatter, until he becomes almost distracted. St. Paul describes wives of this class: "And withal being idle, they learn to go about from house to house: and are not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5 : 13). These are not my words, they are the words of St. Paul. Nor do I mean to say that all wives are like that; let them take it for whom it is meant.

2. There are others who are too prodigal in spending money on dress, useless furniture, gambling, and often (what a shame for a woman!) on drink. If they see others of their condition well dressed, they must be like them; if others have new-fangled laces and ribbons, they are not easy until they have them, too, and for peace' sake their husbands are obliged to give in and spend their hard-earned money, although they can ill afford it, on those useless gimcracks. If a prudent husband objects to this expense, and disapproves of too great luxury in dress, oh, then it is all up with mutual love! His lady wife has neither a good word nor a kind look for him, and there is nothing but quarrelling in the house. If he tries to reason her out of her folly, he has his trouble for nothing, for there is no reasoning with that kind of vanity; the more reasons you bring forward, the more obstinate will the foolish woman grow, lest she should have to confess herself in the wrong. "I must dress in the fashion, like others of my condition," she says, whereas it is her bounden duty to do as her husband tells her. That is the law imposed on her by God; she must obey it, and not the law of the vain world.

3. And what is the use of all that luxury in dress? I am speaking to you, Christian wife; answer me! For whose sake do you dress in that way? Is it for your husband's, whom alone you must try to please? But he would be very glad if

you were not so extravagant. Is it, then, to please others? At least it seems so, for when you are at home with your husband, and do not expect any visitors, you do not care how you dress. Your vain and fashionable apparel is kept for strangers whom you meet outside, or in society, in order to excite their admiration. What must your husband think of that, since he cannot bear to see you trying to attract the notice of others? And it is another hidden thorn in his side when he sees that you are always friendly and smiling with strangers, but gloomy and sour at home. Others, who are free from this vice, are of an obstinate, quarrelsome, and disagreeable disposition. They cannot bear the least thing and must always have the last word. If their husbands make a remark, they are sure to have some snappish answer ready, and then they complain that they are ill-treated and have no peace with their husbands.

4. Worthy, indeed, of pity are the unfortunate men who must live with wives of that kind! It was formerly the custom of the Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews for men to purchase their wives from the parents, either by money or by long service; thus, for instance, the patriarch Jacob had to serve Laban for fourteen years in order to get his daughter Rachel in marriage. David had to slay two hundred Philistines, exposing his life to great danger, before he could get Michol, Saul's daughter, in marriage. It seems also that you must dance attendance for a long time, flatter and do all kinds of service before getting your wives; but perhaps if you had foreseen to what sort of a life they would lead you, many of you would have said: "I will not purchase repentance so dearly!" The words are true: "He that hath found a good wife, hath found a good thing" (Prov. 18 : 22). And again: "Happy is the husband of a good wife" (Ecclus. 16 : 1). On the other hand, miserable are those who are tied to worthless wives. I will quote a few passages for you: "A man will choose any plague but the plague of the heart, and any wickedness but the wickedness

of a woman . . . . There is no head worse than the head of a serpent, and there is no anger above the anger of a woman. It will be more agreeable to abide with a lion and a dragon, than to dwell with a wicked woman. All malice is short to the malice of a woman" (Ecclus. 25 : 18-26).

How must men act so as to preserve union? Learn, then, that in all quarrels, the more sensible gives way, and the stronger yields to the weaker: "Ye husbands likewise dwelling with them according to knowledge, giving honor to the female as to the weaker vessel, and as to the co-heirs of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3 : 7), so as to bear with something from them. Not, however, that you must let them rule over you, for St. Paul does not allow that; he says: "I do not allow the woman to rule over her husband" (1 Tim. 2 : 12), but that you may overlook their faults and failings with as much patience as you can, whenever it is lawful to do so. You must often act as if you had neither eyes nor ears, and bear patiently and silently with a fault that is not very injurious to your domestic interests, as if you had not seen it. If your wife is too avaricious and miserly, think that at all events she will not make you poorer, and do you be all the more generous to the children, the servants, the poor and needy, and you will thus atone for her fault. If she is too extravagant, you can easily remedy that by not leaving too much in her hands, saying at the same time, in a friendly manner, that your circumstances do not allow of such expenditure, and therefore you must put a stop to it. If she is anxious to have the upper hand and to interfere too much, be patient with her; tell her often that she is quite right, and afterwards you can do as you think fit. If she is disobedient and obstinate, do not give her any command, but politely ask her to do as you desire, and let her see that you give in to her, not through want of manly courage, but through kindness, conjugal affection, and a love of peace. If she is too fond of talking, remem-

ber that she is a woman, and do not expect miracles from her. If she is passionate, peevish, and quarrelsome, do not argue with her; if you stir the fire it will blaze all the brighter; be silent and laugh at her in your sleeve; she will soon stop of her own accord. The philosopher Socrates says of himself that he paid no more attention to the constant scolding of his wife, Xantippe, than to the creaking of a wheel. If you wish to get the best in a dispute, keep silent. The victory is complete when one remains silent and gives no answer to the other's abusive words. If she is sometimes sulky and cross with you, pretend to take no notice, and let her come round of her own accord.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church." "Let wives be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord." Be obedient, respectful, helpful, and loving to them! Peace be with you! Oh, if all of you, husbands and wives, were always careful to do your duty properly, what peaceful, pleasant, and happy lives you would have! There is no one in the world without certain faults and failings, which are generally the cause of disunion and strife, even between those who would otherwise love each other dearly. Think that others must bear with your faults. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ" (Galat. 6 : 2). Are your wives faulty? Then, husbands, you must bear with them. Are your husbands faulty? Then, wives, you must bear with them; and both of you in patience and Christian charity, for the love of God! May the bond of love unite your hearts in this short life, in order that it may unite your souls in the long life that is to come! Such is my heartfelt wish for you! Peace be with you. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

JEALOUSY IN THE MARRIED STATE.

"*He delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly.*"—1 Peter 2 : 23.

Christ has suffered for us, leaving an example that you should follow in his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered, he threatened not, but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly. How beautiful it would be for us Christians if we all lived together according to the example of our Model, Jesus Christ! What a happy thing, especially for a married couple, if one knew how to give way to the other! Certainly, peace and union would then be much better preserved. There is yet another thing that causes much trouble and uneasiness. And what is that? Where the peace and quiet of the married life are not disturbed by quarrelling and contention, they often are by rash judgments and secret injurious thoughts on one side or the other; and that occurs when one suspects the other of being unfaithful; therein consists the jealousy that is often found amongst married people. I will speak on jealousy in the married state, and explain,

I. What jealousy is, and what great mischief it works in the married state;

II. How married people are to guard against it, and how one is to act if the other is infected with it.

I. As worms and moths grow in clothes and eat them away, little by little, so jealousy grows out of love and, like a gnawing

worm, eats it away and changes it into hatred. Jealousy is a mental disease which comes from the fear that we have of another getting possession of something that we love, and wish to keep for ourselves: the least interference with the object of our affection disturbs and disquiets the heart and mind exceedingly. Nothing is more common in the world, among all states and conditions, than this malady. The general loves honor and reputation for bravery and heroic actions; a young officer is fortunate enough to vanquish the foe frequently, and thereby makes a name for himself, and the general at once grows jealous of the young man, and cannot bear him, although the latter has conquered the enemies of his country. The praise that the officer gets grates on the ears of the other, who thinks that his own fame and reputation will suffer thereby. Thus Saul, who formerly loved David, hated him at last so much that he tried to take his life, and the sole cause of his hatred was the jealousy he felt when he heard the people singing in David's praise: "Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Kings 18 : 7). A lawyer is jealous of another who gets more cases than he does; a doctor is jealous of another who is more successful in curing disease; a merchant is jealous when he sees another making more profit; a tradesman is jealous of another who possesses more skill in his handicraft. Jealousy is found amongst musicians, painters, and sculptors, on account of their art; amongst women, on account of greater magnificence in dress; in private houses, among children, if one of them is caressed more by his parents than the other.

But there is no state in which this fell disease is easier introduced, and developed more quickly into a mortal illness, than in the married state; and that is because the husband and wife, or either of them, who become infected with that malady, have a twofold, instead of a single love, and that love is a very earnest one indeed. The husband, for instance (and the same may be said of the wife), loves himself and his own happiness best; and

next to himself he loves his wife as one who belongs to him alone; hence comes his ardent desire to be alone loved by her, and a great fear and anxiety lest she should share her heart with others, or conceive an aversion for him. If he sees only the least sign of that, he suspects her of being unfaithful, and is much grieved and distressed thereat; this fear, suspicion, and distress are a real mental disease, and constitute what is called jealousy. How much mischief this malady causes!

It grievously torments the heart that suffers from it. No heavier cross can be found in the married life. Imagine a grisly monster with a hundred eyes and ears always open, so as to see and hear everything, and whatever he sees and hears tortures him most cruelly. Imagine that you see a lot of gloomy, melancholy thoughts and suspicions going in and out of the mind, day and night, without ceasing, like ants in their hill, or wasps in their nest. That is a picture of the heart and mind of a jealous husband. He believes that all his suspicions of his wife are true; that all he dreads is actually occurring. He watches her every step and movement; he suspects all that she says or does in presence of others. Even if she goes to church or says her prayers, he puts a wrong construction on it, and if he cannot detect any outward proof of unfaithfulness, his suspicions and fears sink all the deeper into his mind, and cause him unspeakable torture. But there is no use in describing this any further; they who suffer from it know by experience what a torment it is. Ah, yes! Temporal losses, misfortunes, poverty, sterility, trouble with children, sickness, illness, and death of children, an ill-tempered husband, an obstinate wife, worthless servants, and other trials of that sort which afflict the married state—all these things are easy to bear in comparison with that heart-gnawing disease, jealousy. No matter how courageous and brave a man may be in bearing all changes of fortune, if he once begins to suspect his wife of being unfaithful, his courage is gone from him. No matter how

pious and good a wife may be, and how resigned in bearing crosses and trials, if she grows jealous of her husband, her patience and meekness are turned into fury and wrath. "A jealous woman is the grief and mourning of the heart. With a jealous woman is a scourge of the tongue which communicateth with all" (Ecclus. 26 : 8, 9). The Spouse of the Canticles likens this feeling to the pains of hell: "Jealousy is hard as hell" (Cant. 8 : 6).

Hence, amongst other evils, arise discord, strife, and, in place of ardent love, an implacable hatred between the married pair, along with many sins and vices. Jealousy causes disunion between the married people. For how can the husband look kindly on her whose love and fidelity he doubts? And how can the wife love him who is so suspicious and has such a bad opinion of her, that he watches her every movement. She will certainly begin to distrust her husband before long, and to believe that he is subject to the faults he suspects her of. Thus, although she may have been innocent, honorable, and faithful before, she will now venture on things that she would not have dreamt of doing at first. It is against this that Sacred Scripture warns all husbands: "Be not jealous over the wife of thy bosom, lest she show in thy regard the malice of a wicked lesson" (Ecclus. 9 : 1), that is, that she may not really become what she sees you suspect her of being.

The world has had terrible experience of the effects of this passion. There have been women whom jealousy worked up to such a pitch of fury that, in order to be revenged on their husbands for suspecting them of unfaithfulness, they tore their own children to pieces before their husbands' eyes and cast them at their feet. There have been women who, through jealousy of their husbands, cooked their children and served them up at table, nor did they say a word of what they had done until their husbands had unsuspectingly eaten the horrid repast. Almost all separations of married people have their origin in jealousy.

Unhappy, indeed, is the married life when this fury invades it! And how wicked are you, miserable scandal-mongers, agents of the devil, who delight in telling what you have seen or heard to husband or wife, so as to awaken the suspicions of either and kindle the flame of jealousy between them—a flame which can hardly ever be extinguished afterwards! Christian married people, do all you can to guard against these wicked and mischievous tale-bearers! Love each other constantly, with a true Christian love, which never suspects evil of the beloved one, as St. Paul says: Love suspects no evil (1 Cor. 13 : 5). But how are you to act so that this vice may not find place in your hearts? That I will tell you briefly.

The wife must avoid suspicious company, so as to give no cause for jealousy to her husband. Since either of the married people can give the other occasion for jealousy and suspicions, so both are bound under pain of sin to avoid everything that could give reasonable cause for uneasiness. You must not pour oil on the fire, or it will blaze up more furiously; if a cloud comes up before the sun, it intercepts his rays, and the earth is in darkness. Therefore, the wife must be particularly cautious in this respect, if she sees her husband inclined to be very sensitive, and must carefully avoid all dangerous and suspicious company. They also frequently give cause for uneasiness by being too vain and frivolous in dress, especially when they appear so in company. For young unmarried women to act thus, and dress beyond their means and station, is certainly very wrong and opposed to the humility of the Gospel, no matter what any one says to the contrary; yet there may be a certain excuse for them, inasmuch as they are looking for some one whom they would be willing to please. Merchants are accustomed to polish up their goods and make them look well, so as to be rid of them all the sooner. But for a married woman, who has already entered on a state of life in which she should seek to please her husband and no other, to

give way to vanity in dress, and that not at home, either, where her husband alone could see her, but in company and amongst strangers, such conduct must certainly appear very suspicious to a respectable and honorable man.

Above all, wives should have piety and fear of the Lord, and give their husbands an example therein. The pious are never thought ill of, while, on the contrary, they who are cold in the divine service, worldly in their lives, careless in their devotions, neglectful of confession and holy Communion, and remiss in hearing sermons, easily give reason to think that, as they do not serve the Lord their God faithfully, so also they are wanting in fidelity to their husbands. Finally, they must always be friendly and loving toward their husbands, so as to give a proof of the love and affection they have for them. If a wife is always gloomy, unfriendly and distant with her husband, how can he think anything good of her? At least he must doubt the sincerity of her love for him, so that if he loves her as he ought, he will be filled with distressing and anxious thoughts. Sometimes wives complain that their husbands are jealous; that they are too sensitive; that they are always on the watch; that they keep them shut up like nuns in the house; that they never allow them any amusement or society unless in their presence. But we might easily ask those who make that complaint: and how do you behave? Perhaps your conduct is such that your husbands have good reason to mistrust you. Examine yourselves and see whether you have not erred in some of the particulars mentioned already. If that is the case, it is no wonder, indeed, that your husbands are jealous! They would act stupidly and unreasonably otherwise.

If the wife is bound in conscience to avoid and shun everything that could give her husband reasonable cause for jealousy, so also is the husband equally bound to refrain from everything that might give just grounds of suspicion to his wife; and his obligation is even stronger, because, generally

speaking, her love is much more sensitive and more exposed to the dangers of suspicious fears and jealousy. When a wife is accused of being unfaithful to her husband, the judge first tries to find out what sort of a life her husband leads: "For it seems to be very unjust that a man should require in his wife a purity which he himself does not observe" (Cant. 2 : 2). The same thing may be said here. It is useless and unjust for a man to keep his wife locked up at home, while he himself goes about as he pleases, day and night, without having any business to transact that would necessitate his absence from home. It is useless for him to expect her to be humble, modest, and reserved in company, and not to be too friendly with persons of the other sex, while he acts in the opposite way and allows himself the greatest freedom in his conduct and conversation with other women. And that is, unfortunately, only too often the case, and poor wives must sit down quietly and look on, their cheeks burning with shame! It is useless and unjust for him to forbid her all conversation with strangers, unless in his presence, while he is altogether too free in his manner and conversation, even with his own female servants, although his wife is looking on and must feel troubled and distressed. It is useless and unjust for him to expect her to meet him always with a smiling countenance, while he is stern, gloomy, and harsh in his manner to her. To no purpose does he require her to be pious and devout, in order that she may give no cause for suspicion, if he himself leads a loose, unchristian, and scandalous life, and thereby gives her good reason to doubt his fidelity. No; as far as this matter is concerned, the wife has just as much right as the husband. They must both be, therefore, very careful to avoid everything that is likely to cause suspicion.

It often happens that the wife or the husband gives way to jealousy without any reasonable cause, and shows it by an anxious fear. What is to be done, then, so as to preserve peace and unity? Both must have a sincere compassion for each other,

and think that the fear and anxiety are not the result of malice or treachery, but, as is really the case, of a too ardent love that one has for the other. The husband has great reason to rejoice that his wife esteems him so highly that she desires to possess his whole heart, and is troubled at the bare thought of a stranger having any share in it; and similarly the wife with regard to the husband. They must rejoice, too, at the preservation of conjugal chastity, of which jealousy is an almost certain sign; for if the wife, for instance, were unfaithful, she would not be much distressed if her husband acted coldly toward her. So, also, the husband would not trouble himself much about his wife if he were involved in an impure attachment.

Finally, in order to avoid this dangerous and loathsome disease, remember the warning of our Lord: "Judge not." Think no evil of each other. We must look upon our neighbor as good and pious, until we know for certain that he is wicked. Such is the Christian law and the true foundation of Christian charity. Therefore, put away all fears and suspicions, and treat them as mere bugbears of the imagination, as in truth they generally are. Put the best meaning on everything that you hear of, see, and remark in each other, as every Christian is obliged to do with regard to his neighbor's actions. If you are sometimes troubled with suspicions of your husband or wife, remember the words of Christ to the Pharisees: "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" Do not listen to scandalmongers, who blow sometimes hot, sometimes cold from the same mouth, when, under the appearance of intimacy or friendship, they tell one of you something suspicious they have seen or remarked in the other. Never be too curious in inquiring into each other's conduct; for he who asks many questions gets many different and disagreeable answers. He who is too anxious to know everything will find out a great deal that he would rather not know, and will cause himself much trouble and uneasiness.

St. Jerome says to a jealous husband (and wives may make a similar application of his words): "What is the good of the jealous care with which you look after your wife?" What is the use of it? If she is good and pure, your care is not necessary; if she is not, it will not cause her to amend. Why do you then torture yourself? Balaam taught Josaphat a similar lesson by means of the following fable: A man once caught a nightingale and was about to twist its neck. Oh, cried the bird, spare my life, and in gratitude I will give you a piece of advice that will often help you during your life. Tell it to me, said the man, and I will give you your liberty. Always be careful of three things: never try to catch a thing that will not let itself be caught; never believe a thing that is not probable; never bewail a lost good which you can never recover. The bird was then set free, but no sooner had it recovered its liberty than it perched upon a tree, and spoke thus to the man: Oh, you poor simpleton, what have you done? What a great fortune you have lost; for if you had killed and cut me open, you would have been a rich man for the rest of your life, since I have a pearl as big as the egg of an ostrich in my body. Alas, said the man, would that I had known that at first! Come with me to my house; I will give you a hearty welcome, and the best of food. The bird then laughed at him and said: What a stupid man you are to forget my advice so soon! Is it likely that I could have such a large pearl in my small body? Why do you believe it, then? Do you think I would allow you to catch me a second time? Why do you try to do so? You have lost me and cannot have me again; why do you bewail a loss for which there is no help?

I conclude with the same exhortation to you, married Christians, and I say: Is your husband, oh, wife, or your wife, oh, husband, true to you in conjugal love? Then never believe nor fear that this fidelity will be shaken, for it is not likely that such will ever be the case. Is either of you too incautious and

free in conduct? Then the other must not be too anxious and jealous, for such care would be fruitless and profit nothing. Are you certain that you have been betrayed? Then do not trouble nor distress yourself too much about it, but commend yourself to God; for what is done cannot be undone by any amount of grief or sorrow. Love each other with firm confidence; select as your patrons that most holy married pair, Mary and Joseph. Although the latter was troubled about his spouse, yet, according to the holy fathers, he never gave way to an evil thought about her, but submitted his reason to a mystery that he could not understand. That he had the idea of sending her away privately arose from the fact that he was a just man, and therefore he wished to obey the law. Love your God constantly, and serve him truly, and there will be no jealousy between you, and you will preserve peace, union, quiet, and heartfelt love, until you both see each other in the city of heavenly peace. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE UNNECESSARY TROUBLES OF MARRIED PEOPLE.

"*You shall be made sorrowful.*"—John 16 : 20.

The ordinary, and, as I think, beautiful salutation among the ancient Greeks, when meeting one another in the street, was: "May you do well and be joyful." In our days we have other forms of greeting, such as: Good-morning, good-evening, good-day, a happy new year, or, if one is going anywhere, a pleasant journey; or, if one wishes to pay compliments, he says, your servant, your most obedient servant, and most frequently these expressions are mere empty words, and nothing

more. I will adress you after the maner of the Greeks, and wish that you *may do well and be joyful.* This is my heartfelt wish for you especially, married Christians, and I wish most earnestly that I could really cause you to feel this most desirable joy. But our Saviour has said something else to all his elect who do good and try to live piously: "You shall be made sorrowful." In the married state, especially, as you well know, there are, now and then, reasons enough for sorrow. Either the marriage is unfortunate, so that you do not live peacefully together—and that is, indeed, a great cross—or if it is fortunate, so that you live in peace and love together—and that is a great blessing, indeed. Yet you often find things to trouble you, some of which give you reasonable cause for sorrow, while you yourselves make crosses and troubles of others without any necessity, nay, sometimes even when you should have rejoiced at them.

I. Some married people trouble themselves without any reasonable cause.

II. Others trouble themselves when they should rather rejoice.

I. Sadness is a pain and perturbation of mind, on account of a suffering from which one wishes to be freed, or on account of an unsatisfied desire. There are four kinds of sadness:

1. The first is when one is troubled at seeing or knowing of the sufferings or misfortunes of another; thus, the mother is troubled at the pain her child suffers, the friend on account of his friend's misfortune, and every kind-hearted man at the misery of his fellow-man. This sadness is called *compassion* or *pity.*

2. The second is, when one is troubled at another's well-being, because, for instance, the other is richer, more learned, or happier. Such was the case with Joseph's brethren when they saw him more richly dressed than they were. This is *envy.*

3. The third is when one is grieved at what he believes to be an injustice, or a thing that should not occur, although it may not concern him. Thus, many a one is grieved at a manifest wrong, or because another is intrusted with a charge that he is not fitted for. This is called *indignation.* If this is caused by something contrary to the honor due to God, it is called *pious zeal.*

4. The fourth kind of sadness is the grief that every one feels in contradictions that affect himself, and that trouble either the soul or the body. Thus, the merchant is grieved at the losses he has suffered, or because he has not gained a lawsuit; an honorable man is grieved at an insult offered him; a husband is grieved at the death of his wife; the wife at the death of her husband; the parents at the illness or death of their children. And this is what is properly called *sadness.*

None of these four kinds is of any use when it is excessive, or when it comes from an unreasonable cause; and it is one of the rarest arts in the world to know how to be sad, and how to be joyful, at the proper time, and in the proper degree. If all men, and especially married people, understood this art thoroughly, and used it properly, how much unnecessary trouble would be avoided! Many things occur in the married state which give just cause for trouble and sadness, but it is true, nevertheless, that many people make their troubles greater than they ought to be; nay, they often trouble themselves without any reasonable cause. They seek troubles with a lantern, and bring them into their houses, contrary to the warning: "Give not up thy soul to sadness, and afflict not thyself in thy own counsel" (Ecclus. 30 : 22).

I will say nothing of those who annoy themselves about things that do not concern them; like that malefactor who, while he was being led to the gallows, kept on grumbling and murmuring the whole way. And what was he grumbling about? About having to die such a shameful death, as any one would

imagine? That would, indeed, be a rational subject for discontent; but that did not trouble him. He was annoyed because the streets were not better kept, and were allowed to be encumbered with all sorts of rubbish. Oh, foolish man, how do the streets concern you? Leave the care of them to the other citizens, who must walk on them many times a day and often experience the inconvenience of them. What is it to you whether the streets are clean or dirty, well or ill kept, since you will never walk on them again? Any street is good enough to walk to the gallows on. In almost the same manner do many make troubles and annoyances for themselves, and grumble at things that they have, so to say, picked up in the streets. Look, they say, what a grand house such a one has built, as if he wished to spite us and other decent people! See how finely that woman and her daughters are dressed, and what airs they put on, as if we did not know them! It is enough to make one cross; could we not do the same if we chose? If I could not fill that office better than such a one, I would not undertake it; he is only fit to annoy the people. They trouble themselves with things of this kind, and sometimes to such an extent that they become quite unhappy and discontented. Why do you plague yourselves about such foolish things? I must ask you: "What is that to thee?" (John 21 : 22). Why do you trouble yourselves with the concerns of others? Have you nothing to annoy you at home? If you have not, you ought to live in peace and be cheerful. Do not seek for troubles, especially in matters that do not concern you.

Another source of trouble, common enough amongst married people especially, even when they live together in harmony, is that they make crosses and trials for themselves in their own imaginations, where in reality none exist, or they make mountains out of molehills. People are often more troubled at fancied troubles than at real ones, like horses that are afraid of their own shadow on the road. We have an example of this

in the prophet Jonas. Behold him seated alone, full of sorrow and affliction: "And Jonas was exceedingly troubled and was angry" (Jon. 4 : 1). Poor prophet! what is the matter with you, that you weep and lament so? Here is what ailed him: At the command of God he had gone through the great city of Ninive, and foretold its destruction to its inhabitants in these words: "Yet forty days, and Ninive shall be destroyed" (Jon. 3 : 4). But since the people, terrified at the prophecy, had done penance and repented for their sins, God was appeased, and, recalling the sentence he had pronounced, resolved to spare the city. Jonas, meanwhile, was anxiously awaiting the fortieth day, as that on which his prediction was to be fulfilled. He looked up to heaven and down to earth, hoping to see some sign that his prophecy was coming true, but in vain! The fortieth day passed, and several more days also, and Ninive was still untouched. That was what troubled Jonas so much. Filled with shame, and hiding his face so that no one might recognize him, he slunk out of the city into a deserted place, and there commenced his lamentations: What, he said, am I the preacher and prophet, to be thus put to shame? I have been told to announce an event that was sure to happen, and now the contrary takes place; thus I am a false prophet, that is my reward: "Oh, Lord, I beseech thee, take my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jon. 4 : 3), and to bear my grief and my shame together.

"Ah, Jonas, Jonas," said God to him, "dost thou think thou hast reason to be angry?" (Jon. 4 : 4.) Is that the whole cause of thy trouble? What greater consolation could there be for a preacher than to see his hearers shed tears of repentance, amend their lives, and escape the punishment they were threatened with by God? You should rejoice at having done your work so well, but instead of rejoicing you are troubled so much as to desire death! Dost thou think thou hadst just cause for thy anger? There is no doubt, my dear brethren, that Jonas

had no reason for sorrow, but rather much reason for joy. His trouble came solely from his own imagination. He thought that the whole city would look upon him as a false prophet who had betrayed the people and made them fast and do penance for nothing; whereas the contrary was really the case.

How many there are who might be asked the same question: "Dost thou think thou hast reason to be angry?" You, oh, husband, who give way to all sorts of fancies if your wife only turns her head aside, or if she fails to meet you in her usual friendly manner; do you think that you have reason to be angry? You, oh, wife, if your husband, occupied with other cares, appears before you with a stern countenance, or gives you a short answer without meaning any harm, immediately think that his love is growing cold or that he despises, neglects, or hates you; then the two of you go about the whole day, gloomy and ill-tempered, not speaking a word to each other, and tormenting yourselves to such an extent that you can hardly sleep at night, and if the cause of all this trouble is sought for, it will be found to exist merely in the imagination.

II. Others trouble themselves when they should rejoice. Children are the most fruitful cause of unnecessary trouble in the married life. Some people cannot be consoled because they have no children; others, because they have too many; others, again, because their children die young. Let us see, now, whether they have cause for sorrow, and not rather for joy and consolation.

1. First, those who have no children, although they wish very much to have them. It is true that the principal end of the married state is to bring up children in the service of God, and to lead their souls to heaven, that they may praise God and bless him for all eternity. It is true that children, when they are good, are the crown and joy of their parents, and therefore, in the Old Law, unfruitfulness was looked upon

as a great misfortune, nay, even a shame and disgrace. How afflicted Anna, the wife of Elcana, was on account of her barrenness! She could not eat or drink; her daily occupation was to weep and sigh because she had no children, so that at last her husband said to her: "Anna, why weepest thou and why dost thou not eat?" (1 Kings 1 : 8.) And Rachel, too, how troubled she was. I must have children, she said to her husband, "otherwise I shall die" (Gen. 30 : 1). Now, although sterility is to be attributed to natural causes, yet it certainly depends on the decrees of God's providence, and therefore the patriarch Jacob answered the complaints of Rachel by saying: "Am I as God, who hath deprived thee of the fruit of thy womb?" (Gen. 30 : 2.)

And meanwhile, I ask all who thus trouble themselves, do you think you have just cause for sorrow? You should rather rejoice, for, in the first place, how many duties, cares, obligations, fears, and anxieties you escape, which fathers and mothers must suffer, precisely because they have children! To say nothing of the inconvenience and discomfort they have to put up with day and night, while their children are still very young. What a great responsibility is theirs if they do not bring up their children in a Christian manner! How great their trouble and anxiety if their children get sick! How deep their affliction if they die! How profound their grief if their children are deprived of their reason, or suffer some other defect! And what a trial it is when they are disobedient, wicked, disrespectful, and obstinate! What care and labor it takes to feed and clothe them decently! See from what God has freed you.

Perhaps you are wealthy, and are therefore sorry that you have no heirs to whom you may leave your possessions. Why should that annoy you? If you wish, you can find heirs enough, to whom it will be far better for you and more useful for your souls to leave your money. There are some birds that

rear the young of other birds, as if they were their own; as we know to be the case with hens, that often rear ducklings. How many poor orphans there are who, on the death of their parents, are abandoned by every one! They have neither money, nor food, nor clothing. It is of them that Jesus Christ has said: "He that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me" (Matt. 18 : 3). Take them into your house, then, or at least into your care; provide for their wants. They will certainly, in their gratitude, look upon you as their father and mother, and they will be to you as children, to replace those whom you anxiously ask from God. You can adopt as many of them as you wish, and in their persons you can feed and clothe Jesus Christ himself. Do you wish for some one to inherit your property when you die? How many poor people there are here and there, and perhaps in your very neighborhood, who are in want, and may, unknown to others, be without anything to eat, because they are ashamed to beg! They, too, represent the Person of Jesus Christ. Make them your heirs; you will lose nothing by them, but will gain a great deal. They will make over your property to heaven, so that you will be able to live on it forever. And in that way, too, Jesus Christ will be your heir and inheritance.

2. Just as they who have no children bewail their lot, so, also, they who have a numerous offspring groan under the burden, and complain that they have neither time nor means to bring them up properly. But even you, if you think of the matter sensibly, have more cause for consolation than sorrow. For, with regard to the annoyance and want of time of which you complain, tell me, are you so badly off after all? There is a shopkeeper who must spend the whole day at his business; he is hardly out of bed in the early morning when he hears people knocking at the door, who want to buy something; while he is attending to them others come, and so it goes from morning to night; customers are constantly coming

in; one wants this, another that; his house is always full of people, so that he has hardly time enough to take his meals, and in the evening he is not able to stand for weariness. What do you think of his case? It is truly very hard for the poor man to bear it! But did you ever hear a shopkeeper complain that too many customers come to him? I should think not; for on that his business depends. The more customers he has, the better pleased he is, and although they give him trouble, he is always glad to see them. He looks upon the trouble as nothing, provided he can make more money by it. Christian married people, what is the end and aim of the married state? The principal reason why you have chosen that state is to bring up children in the service of God. That is your principal duty, by performing which you will render a most pleasing service to God and will save your souls; that is your chief business, by which you can gain great glory in heaven for yourselves and your children. So that, if you have many children, are you to be afflicted therefore? Certainly the annoyances, difficulties, and cares of your state will be increased. One child is crying out for something here, another there; one wants this, another that, and the parents often do not know which they are to attend to first. But it is in these very trials that your business consists. The more souls you can bring to heaven, the greater your gain and merit for eternity, and therefore you should rejoice at the good opportunity you have in your numerous offspring. But, you think, it is easy to talk; if there are many children, they will require a good deal of food and clothing, and where is it to come from?

Be satisfied! God, who sends you many to be fed, will also send you food for them, if you manage matters properly. Bring up your children as well as you can; some for a profession, others for an honorable trade or business. Let none of them be idle; where there are many to work, there are many to earn. Only serve God, and put your confidence in him as your

heavenly Father, and he who fed the five thousand with a few loaves of bread will not allow you or your children to suffer want, if you are only true to him.

3. The third and last class of married people who trouble themselves without cause, consists of those whose children die young. If the tree puts forth many blossoms, if the vine promises to bear well, we are more grieved when a frost or a hail-storm puts an end to our hopes, than if we had never had any reason to hope, such as would be the case if the fruit tree or the vine perished in mid-winter. Such is also the case with parents: they bewail their misfortune if their children die in the bloom of youth, just at the time when they promised to be a support and comfort to their parents for many years to come, far more than if they had no children at all. Alas, the mother sighs and laments: My only son; what a charming child he was! And now he is dead! My poor little daughter! I loved her most of all my children, and now she is dead, and all my consolation is gone with her! I am almost inclined to despair when I think of it! I shall not forget her as long as I live! Oh, what a trial, what a cross! What misery and affliction! Oh, poor, afflicted people, certainly the hand of God lies heavily upon you! Could there be a greater sorrow upon earth? No, it is impossible that there could be! Weep, therefore, and bewail your misery as much as you please; but if I were looking at you, instead of pitying you, I should be inclined to laugh, or if I had to show pity outwardly it would be, not for your sorrow, but for your folly. Do you think you have cause to afflict yourself so excessively? Excessively, I say, because it is natural, and no parent is to be blamed for it; it is natural to be sorry for the death of a child. But, I ask you again, have you any occasion for such *excessive* sorrow? In truth, if ever there was occasion for consolation and joy, it is this; for in addition to all the advantages which they have who are without children, they who have a child in

heaven have a consolation and joy that the others are without. And must I ask you why you brought into the world that child whose death you deplore? Was it that it might live a long life here below? No, certainly, that would not be enough; its only end was heaven, and your duty, strictly defined for you by the Almighty God, was to lead it there by every means in your power. And you have attained your object; your dear child is where it ought to be, and where you were bound to lead it. And yet you are so overwhelmed with sorrow!

Married Christians, do not torment yourselves by your own fancies where you have no reason to be troubled, much less when you have rather reason to rejoice. The married state brings cares and troubles enough with it; do not make unnecessary cares for yourselves. If you have nothing else to suffer, think that by your unreasonable cares you may force the Almighty to send you some of the real crosses and trials that others have to bear, and then you will have cause enough to mourn and lament. You are like a little child that sits crying at the door, until its mother runs out and asks: What is the matter with you? Who has done anything to you? But the child continues to cry until the mother gets vexed, and at last takes the rod and gives the child a good beating, saying to it: There, now you have something to cry for. I tell you, therefore, to be careful that God does not act with you in the same way. And now: "Do well and rejoice," and, as St. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil 4 : 4), in a good conscience, and in a virtuous and Christian life, which will bring you safely from this life to eternal joy. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

CONSOLATION OF MARRIED PEOPLE IN TROUBLE.

"Because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart."—John 16 : 6.

The disciples of Jesus Christ had good reason for sorrow and trouble when they learned that their beloved Master was about to leave them and go to heaven; and yet, as he declares, it was good for them that he should leave them: "It is expedient to you that I go," so that the disciples had more reason to rejoice. In the same way, many married people trouble themselves without cause, or even when they have cause to rejoice. But there are also many real troubles in the married state, which must be borne with patience. How are married people to console themselves under these, and how are they to make them lighter, will be the subject of the present instruction.

I. Consolation in the trials caused by children.

II. Consolation in the trials caused, even involuntarily, by one of the married couple.

I. Married people have different kinds of troubles to suffer from their children; for the latter may be wicked and unruly, or they may be weakly and delicate; or, through poverty, there may be a lack of means to support them properly. These three kinds of trials are very hard for parents to bear, and, since they give just reason for anxiety, they require great patience.

1. If the children are wicked and unruly, that is a heavy cross indeed! Solomon says: "I hated all my application

wherewith I had earnestly labored under the sun." And why so, oh, wisest of kings? "Being like to have an heir after me, whom I know not whether he will be a wise man or a fool" (Eccles. 2 : 18, 19); that is to say, whether he will be pious or wicked. Certainly, it was good reason for anxiety not to know how his son would act after his death. How would it have been with him if he had seen (as was really the case) the wicked son Roboam bringing his happy kingdom to destruction? In truth, many parents have been grieved to death by the conduct of their children. The emperor Severus died through grief at the dissensions of his sons, and the trouble they caused him. Marcus Aurelius Antonius starved himself to death because he saw that his son Commodus was a cruel and savage man. And yet, what wonder is it that Solomon, who was unfaithful to God, and the two last named, who were impious persecutors of the Christians, should have wicked and impious children? As the tree, so the fruit. And, therefore, Christian parents who give their children bad example are not much to be pitied when the latter follow in their footsteps; they are the cause of their own troubles. But what a sad thing it is for pious parents, who have tried to rear their children well, by duly chastising them and giving them a good example of piety and virtue, to see that they turn out disobedient, obstinate, reckless, given to lying, cheating, cursing, drinking, immorality, and other vices, and are therefore on the high road to hell? Could there be a greater trial than this for a pious father and mother?

Yet, you must not despair! Your grief should in part be mitigated by the thought that you have done your duty, and that you have not been wanting in your parental obligations. God does not require any more from you. If all your labor and trouble profit little with your wicked child, at all events your future reward will be none the less, but will rather be increased, on account of the anxiety you suffer. Console yourselves, Christian parents, as far as the salvation of your souls is con-

cerned; and, although you have just cause to pity your miserable children, who wilfully ruin their souls, still you must never despair of their conversion. Do like the pious Job, who arose every morning and offered sacrifice for each of his children, for fear lest they should have offended God. Pray daily and fervently that God, who holds the hearts of all men in his hands, may give your children the grace to repent and to lead pious lives. Trustful and fervent prayer can work wonders with the Lord. You will thus become parents of your children in a twofold sense; for you will not only have given them their natural lives, but you will also have brought forth their souls to life for God and heaven.

2. Although it is a hard thing for pious parents to have wicked children, yet there are some who attach little importance to the future life, and who think it a far greater trial to have weak and delicate, or deformed children. For instance, the children have distorted features; one is stupid or even silly; another is sickly and delicate; a third is blind, lame, or crippled. Such is the whole cause of the parents' sorrow and trouble: Oh, my poor son, they think, full of anxiety; oh, my unhappy daughter! What am I to do with them? How can I provide for them? What will become of them when I am gone? Is it not a great misfortune? Even if they were with God in heaven, we should die happy! And thus they lament. But why are you so troubled, to no purpose, about the divine will? God, who has created your children, knows why he made them deformed or sickly. Say with David: "He made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. 99 : 3). We often do not know what we wish, or desire, or ask from God, nor what we complain of and grieve about. He is the Lord, who alone knows what is best for each one of us, in every circumstance. He is the Lord, whose providence arranges all things for the good of man. When you think of your children, remember what Christ said: "It is better for thee, having one eye, to enter

into life," with one hand, or lame and crippled, with one foot, "than having two eyes, to be cast into hell's fire" (Matt. 18 : 9), with two hands, or two feet. And, therefore, he tells us to pluck out an eye, to cut off a hand or foot, if we are thereby led into sin. Remember that if your children were all beautiful, clever, or healthy, they might become worldly, as God has foreseen; they might sink into all kinds of vice and sin and be lost forever. As it is, their natural defects keep them out of many occasions of evil, and they will one day rise again, free from every defect, to rejoice with God in heaven. Could you desire anything better than this for your children? Therefore, let the Almighty dispose of them as he pleases. Thank him, and be satisfied with your children such as he has given them to you.

Meanwhile, as far as bringing them up to virtue is concerned, you must be as careful of them as of your other children, whom you think possess better natural qualities. The former are made to the image of the Almighty God, just as well as the latter. If a precious treasure is confided to my care, I must guard it well, and not allow it to be stolen, whether the box which contains it is black or white, made of plain wood, or of gold and silver. For the box does not increase or lessen the value of the treasure it contains. Married Christians, the souls of your children are the precious treasures that the divine goodness has entrusted to your charge for a time. The body is only a box, or, to speak better, a worthless sack, in which that royal treasure, the soul, lies concealed. What matters it, then, whether the sack is beautiful or ugly, crooked or straight? In any case it contains a beautiful soul that is pleasing to God, and that, therefore, you also must love and esteem. And besides, if you look after your deformed or sickly children as you ought, and be satisfied with the decrees of Providence, your temporal interests will not suffer.

3. One of the heaviest crosses for married people, at least,

according to their own idea, is to have children, and not to have bread enough to give them, or to try to rear them according to their condition without having the means to do so. Certainly, poverty is hated by all. But it arises either from the fault of married people themselves, or from the arrangements of divine Providence.

If it comes from their own fault, either because they marry without sufficient means, and know not how they are to earn anything to support themselves and those who depend on them, or because, although they know how to earn, they are too idle and too fond of their own ease to work. What else can be the result of that but a house full of poor children? Or, as also frequently happens, the married couple may have means enough to live comfortably, and to support their children decently and respectably, but through carelessness they allow their wealth gradually to slip through their fingers, and so reduce themselves to poverty in the long run. They spread their wings too far; they bend the bow until it breaks. They try to be like others in respect to food, clothing, and housekeeping, although their means do not allow it. They dress their children expensively, and let them go about doing nothing, so that they appear to be richer than they really are, and at last they are forced to suffer the pinch of poverty, which they could have avoided by living in Christian humility and modesty, according to their means. How many cases of that kind there are in the world, and perhaps in our very midst! Go on with your luxury in dress and expensive living; you will find out your mistake in the end! I have never had the gift of prophecy, but in this matter I know that I will prove a true prophet, and that I am right in saying that your children and your children's children will suffer want. These people and such as these may blame themselves for their poverty and the trials it entails, and they will certainly have to give a strict account to

their Judge hereafter for having thus wilfully reduced their children to poverty.

II. I pass on now to the other trials, which the married couple most wickedly cause each other by unfaithfulness, aversion, hatred, avarice, extravagance, cruelty, by which discord is introduced into the married state.

1. The first of these causes is great anxiety to two hearts that really love each other, especially when the illness is of long duration. We can easily imagine how people feel in such circumstances: the sick person has pain and sorrow enough, while the other, who is in good health, is almost as badly off, either through pity, or on account of the labor of attending on the former. And what advice is to be given to them in such a case? None, except that they should resign themselves humbly to the will of God; for it is certain that health and sickness, life and death, come from the Lord, and sickness is a gift of God, as well as health. Trials of this kind are often useful, nay, even necessary for us, since thereby our eyes are opened, and we can see where we are here below, namely, in a vale of tears, where we can have no joy or consolation unmixed with trials and suffering. If married people, who truly love each other, were always in good health, they would often lose nearly every desire for the joys of heaven, and would dread nothing more than death, which would separate them, and rob them of the paradise they think they have found on earth. Therefore, God often visits them, afflicts one of them with a tedious illness, and thus disturbs their joy, so that they may both learn that their true country is not here, but in eternity, and that they cannot reach it except by the rough road of trials and difficulties.

2. For the same reason God frequently dissolves the bond of marriage, and takes one of them away by a premature death. That is the hardest trial of all for married people who love each

other. It pierces the heart of the survivor with a sorrow that can hardly be healed for the first half-year. And truly, one must be made of marble or iron not to grieve over the unexpected loss of a person in whom all one's love, happiness, and consolation have been centred, next after God. There is not even a savage beast but grieves when it is is deprived of something it has long been attached to. But let that be as it may, what is the use of so much weeping and sorrowing? Its only effect is to make one pine away with melancholy and ruin one's health. All our tears will not restore the dead to life, nor be of any help to one who has entered into eternity.

Married Christians, the best thing for married people to do in such a case is to put away the sorrowful thoughts out of your minds, and occupy yourselves with some lawful business. Think also for your consolation: It is done now, and I cannot undo it; such is the will of God; the Lord has given me my husband, or my wife, he has taken back his gift: "Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1 : 21). I knew very well, when I was getting married, that I was uniting myself to a mortal who could not escape death some time or other; why should I now grieve and sorrow so much for the death of that mortal, who has accomplished a journey that I, too, must end in the same manner. I am not astonished when I see that wax melts in the heat of the sun, that wood burns when it is thrown into the fire, that clothes are gnawed away by the moths, for I know that all these things occur according to natural laws. In the same way, I must look upon this death as a mere natural occurrence, since all men must die. How many great people are subject to death, although so many people depend on them, and they must be satisfied with the will of God; why should I not be so, too? My husband, my wife, is, I hope, in heaven; why should I be envious of that great good fortune? He, or she, who is gone before, will prepare the way for me, and will obtain powerful graces for me from God, that I may save my

soul; besides, I can say that the love I formerly gloried in so much on earth is changed into a better and purer one. The object of my affection sees, in the light of God's presence, all my sorrow and affliction, and, perfectly happy while I am weeping, prays that everything may help me to my eternal salvation.

Finally, a general remedy for all trials, no matter where they come from, and a sure source of consolation, is *the love of God* and *a good conscience*. Crosses and trials in this life are generally chastisements that the just God sends to pious Christians, as well as to the wicked, and, indeed, he sends the former far more of them than the latter. But see which of the two is the more afflicted: a good, conscientious man, or a wicked and vicious one? Which of the two is the more easily consoled in similar trials: a pious, virtuous woman, or a vain, frivolous, and worldly-minded one? Which of the two will give way to noisy lamentations, to complaints and murmurs against God and heaven, and to despair and melancholy? A good or a wicked Christian? There is no doubt that if we consult experience we shall find that a slight annoyance, a trifling loss or misfortune, a thing of no account, so to speak, is enough to drive a wicked man to frenzy; while a pious Christian who loves God can bear a far heavier cross much better, for, although he feels it, yet the bitterness of his suffering, the heavy weight of his cross, will not press long upon him, before he has recourse to God for strength. A single confession or Communion, a devout prayer, is enough to make him resigned to the will of God; and therefore, although his eyes are filled with tears, his heart is full of consolation and contentment.

Christian married people, and all who are here present, who are now and then tried in various ways, no matter what your state of life may be, be careful to have a good conscience, and to keep in the friendship of God always, and then, no matter how heavy your cross is, you will be relieved of half the burden; and then resign yourselves to the will of God, and think and

say with patient Job: "If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil" (Job 2 : 10) with patience and resignation? Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

PRAYER OF MARRIED PEOPLE IN THEIR TROUBLES.

"*Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.*"—John 16 : 24.

It is the almighty and most faithful God who says this; consequently, the best and safest means against all difficulties is prayer to God. When I think of that, I must say: Your trials are most useful to you, and most desirable. Because the Lord complains that we pray so little to him, and ask so little from him: "Hitherto you have not asked anything." And so it appears that he sends new crosses sometimes, in order to force and compel you to ask consolation from him in prayer. Therefore, crosses and trials are good for us, because they teach us how to pray for the greater consolation of the afflicted.

I. Troubles teach us to pray.
II. Troubles teach us the best manner of praying.

I. Men could not receive a greater benefit in this mortal life than the gift of prayer. For, since the good of a thing is estimated partly by its necessity, in so far as we cannot do without it, and partly by its usefulness, in so far as it helps us to gain a great deal, what could be more necessary to us poor mortals in the midst of the trials and difficulties of this life, which affect

both soul and body, than prayer? For God has determined, generally speaking, to give not a single gift of grace unless to those who ask him for it. What can be more useful and advantageous than prayer? For everything good that we can wish for and desire can be obtained only by prayer, nay, it must sometimes be sought for with importunity. God says to all men: "Ask, and you shall receive." "Seek, and you shall find." Come on boldly, and seek what you want, and you will find it with me. "Knock" at my door, "and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11 : 9). Remember that God is faithful; he never can fail to fulfil his promises, and his perfections compel him to give us everything he has promised. Therefore, he must give his grace, the eternal joys of heaven, nay, even himself, to all who ask him in the proper way. Hence there is nothing more useful and desirable for human beings than that which forces and compels them to pray, and without which they would neglect such a great good.

And this is precisely the effect of the trials and difficulties that the all-ruling God sends us in different ways. If we have everything to our wishes, then good-by to prayer; no one thinks of it! The majority of people forget their God; he is cheated of his due service; the churches are never crowded; the altars are bare; there are few who raise up their eyes to heaven, few who speak to the good God, few who think of appeasing his anger: "Sacrifices are scarce in prosperous times."

But if the apparently prosperous wheel of fortune turns in another direction; if clouds begin to hide the sun; if the season turns out unfruitful, and brings on scarcity; if a general war disturbs the public tranquillity; if a pestilence hurries off numbers of young and old to the grave, oh, then there is an immediate change to be seen everywhere! The hitherto almost deserted churches are again filled with people; the knee is bent humbly before the great God; the hands are stretched

out to heaven, or folded in prayer; great and small unite in crying out to God for help and mercy. So does the darkness of night compel us to light a candle; the bitter cold of winter drives us to the fire; a severe illness makes us speak kindly to the doctor; the trials and difficulties of life force us to seek help from God by prayer.

In former times the goodness of God had bestowed countless wonderful benefits on the Jewish people, but none of them was more profitable than the rod with which he sometimes chastised them. And why so? Because as long as things went well with them they were rebellious and ungrateful; they forgot God: "They left God, their Maker" (Deut. 32 : 15), and adored false gods. And how must the ungrateful people be taught to return to the true God, and to adore him? They must be forced by necessity: "Their heart was humbled," says David, alluding to their history: "they were weakened," with pestilence, war, and famine, "and there was none to help them," and so they changed very quickly: "Then they cried to the Lord in their affliction" (Ps. 106 : 12, 13).

An equally powerful teacher and master is calamity, not only in a community, but with each individual in particular. Jonas prayed, but when? When he was cast into the sea and swallowed by a monstrous fish. Ezechias prayed with tearful eyes, but when? When he was suffering from a grievous illness, and was on the point of dying. When Ezechias was in good health and prosperous "his heart became filled with pride," but when he was stricken down by sickness, he began to pray as he never did before. Samson prayed, but it was when the Philistines put out his eyes and imprisoned him. The three Hebrew children prayed in the fiery furnace. Daniel, though he often prayed at other times, was especially devout in the lions' den. Jacob prayed the whole night through when he was expecting to be attacked by his brother Esau. I hear the disciples of Jesus Christ crying out: "Lord, save us, we perish!"

but when? When their boat was on the point of being overwhelmed by the storm; whereas, before the danger threatened them, they allowed their Master to sleep and were talking about other things. The Chananæan woman prayed because her daughter was possessed of an evil spirit. The Centurion prayed, because his servant was stricken with the palsy. The blind man prayed by the wayside, because he wished to have his sight restored to him. The ruler of the synagogue prayed, because his daughter was dead. The ruler of Capharnaum prayed, when his son was in danger of death. Martha and Magdalen prayed when their brother Lazarus lay at the point of death. Thus it is true that prayer is both the fruit and the reward of calamity.

If this means is necessary for any state of life, it certainly is for the married state. If everything went according to their wishes, and if they had no trials to bear, they would hardly think seriously and earnestly of God once in the day, nor would they see any necessity of praying to him for anything; but they would turn away from him like little children, and abandon him. And then the Almighty says: If you will not remain with me, and pray to me, I will teach you how to do it. He then immediately commands his servants, that is, his creatures, to take away some of their wealth from those people; to bring sickness on their beloved son; to cause the husband or wife a mortal illness; to trouble the parents by the wilfulness and obstinacy of the children; to make one of the married couple a source of grief and anxiety to the other. And to what purpose? That they may learn to have recourse to him, to stretch out their hands to him, and implore his help. In that way they learn to pray; otherwise they would not have thought of it.

And, what is still better, not only will they be driven to have recourse to God by prayer, but also, generally speaking, the words of the Gospel with regard to the ruler will be verified with regard to them, and to their household: "Himself believed,

and his whole house" (John 4 : 53). In such trials not only do the married couple themselves learn to pray, but all the children, servants, and friends must help them therein and ask God to assist them, because the trouble affects the whole family. Nor is this all; they get others to pray also, they have Masses said, and they recommend themselves in public devotions to the prayers of the whole congregation. Thus God is praised by the united prayers of many persons; and prayer of that kind is sure to ascend to heaven, according to the infallible promise of Jesus Christ: "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18 : 20). "Whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father" (Matt. 18 : 19).

II. Prayer must be humble. There is praying and praying. The Pharisee prayed in the temple before the altar; the publican prayed at the same time, in the same temple, behind the door. The latter went home justified after his prayer, but not the former. Many Christians pray, nowadays, to whom the words of St. James might be applied: "You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss" (James 4 : 3). So that the first requisite for prayer, to be good and pleasing to God, is *humility*. David says: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles" (Ps. 33 : 7). Who is that poor man; is it only he who is poor in earthly goods? Oh, if that were the case, woe to the rich and wealthy, for their prayers would do them little good! No; the rich are not excluded, if they pray like the poor; that is to say, humbly acknowledging their wants and miseries, and confessing, with full submission to the divine Majesty of God, that they require his help and assistance in everything, and that he alone can free them from their evils. How do poor mendicants act in order to arouse the rich man's pity, and to induce him to give them an alms? If they have a sum of money that they succeeded in scraping

together elsewhere, do they show it to him? By no means; for if they did, he would give them nothing. No; they conceal it as well as they can; they pretend to be much poorer than they really are; they show their ragged clothes and the sores that appear through their torn garments; they point to their faces, emaciated by hunger, and openly declare and acknowledge everything that could excite pity and compassion. We must appear humbly before the great God to ask his help and mercy by prayer. We must declare to him our necessities, wants, and frailties, both of soul and body; we must tell him that we can do nothing and that we have none to help us, and appeal to his goodness and mercy. This is the prayer of which God says: "The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds; and the Lord will not be slack" (Ecclus. 35 : 21, 22).

But when do we feel the greatest impulse to pray? Is it in the time of prosperity? By no means. When everything goes according to our wishes, although we should acknowledge that we have received everything from the goodness of God, who is there who confesses humbly, before the throne of God, wants and miseries that he does not feel? But when the shoe pinches and hurts, when the hand of the Lord wields the rod, when a severe trial or a heavy cross comes near us, or actually upon us, that is the time to humble ourselves. We do not require to borrow words from prayer books then to express the misery that we feel. How easy it is for us to humble ourselves in such circumstances before the Lord our God! How deep and sincere are the sighs and groans with which we show him the ulcers that afflict us, and cry to him for mercy!

See with what great humility the Chananæan woman prayed to Christ to free her daughter from the evil spirit, and herself from her affliction. She prostrates herself before him on the ground, and cries out: "Have mercy on me, oh, Lord, thou

Son of David; my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil" (Matt. 15 : 22). What impelled her to pray so humbly? The affliction she was suffering on account of her daughter's unhappy state; and as the result of her prayer she obtained mercy from our Lord; for he said to her: "Be it done to thee as thou wilt" (Matt. 15 : 28).

2. Another necessary quality for prayer to be efficacious is fervor and earnestness. David says of himself: "I cried with my whole heart: Hear me, oh, Lord!" (Ps. 118 : 145.) What good is it to speak with the lips if the heart is dumb? What good is it to play with the fingers on the keys of an organ if there is no one to blow the bellows? The keys will give forth no music, nor will the prayer of the lips merely have any efficacy. A single Our Father, prayed fervently and earnestly, is worth more, in the sight of God, than a dozen rosaries, or any amount of them, said without fervor and attention. "These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matt. 15 : 8).

True prayer does not consist in saying so many prayers; for what is the general character of them? If they were all counted up together, many of them would be represented by a mere cipher. There is more idleness than devotion in such prayers. There is such curiosity of the eyes, and such distraction of the mind, that the devil laughs at those prayers. Many read all sorts of things in their books, and do not understand what they are reading, what they desire, or what they are asking for; they are not at all in earnest about receiving from God what they ask for in that way. The Our Father is certainly said hundreds and thousands of times, and many who say it so often do not once earnestly desire that a single petition contained in it be fulfilled; and meanwhile, a soul overwhelmed with affliction at some heavy cross cries out only once to heaven: Lord, grant me patience; Lord, help me in my necessity; or, Lord, thy will be done! This one sigh is more to the glory

of God, and to the advantage of the soul, than all the long, unfervent, and distracted prayers that are said in time of prosperity.

The approach, or the actual arrival of misfortune, fills the heart with the proper zeal and fervor in prayer. If a beam of wood falls upon a man and crushes him, he does not want a prayer book then; like a hungry beggar, he will easily find a few earnest words, coming straight from the heart, to make known his difficulty to God. In prosperity it is the book that speaks; in adversity, it is our will. Formerly it was merely the lips that moved in prayer, now it is the heart. The eyes do not wander about, the whole being is absorbed in prayer, through the intense desire of being heard.

Pray, then, Christian married people, and all of you; such is my conclusion, in the words of St. James: "Is any of you sad? let him pray" (James 5 : 13). Pray with fervor and humility, as often as difficulties in your state of life cause you sorrow and suffering. Do not say, as people often do: I am so troubled and annoyed at home, that I can do no good; I cannot say a single Our Father devoutly, and it is that which causes me the greatest uneasiness. What do you mean by saying that you cannot pray? If it were possible to pray only in the church, where you can read as much as you like out of your prayer book, quietly and devoutly, then I should acknowledge that crosses and trials would prevent rather than encourage devotion. But real prayer does not consist in that. If you only think of God in your troubles, humbly acknowledge that your crosses come from his hand; if you only cry out from the bottom of your heart: Lord, have mercy on me; Lord, give me patience, you will have prayed very well, indeed. It is easy for you to do that, no matter how troubled you are, and you really often do it, too. Cry out to heaven frequently in that way, and you may be assured that you will not have long to wait for help, or at least for consolation from God, who tells us

that he is our loving Father, and that his promises cannot deceive us: "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full!" Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

REFLECTION IN THE ACTUAL SELECTION OF A STATE OF LIFE.

"*These things I have told you: that when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.*"—John 16 : 4.

Christ applies these words to you to-day, Christian sons and daughters! Wherefore, this much having been said concerning the different states of life and their difficulties, as well as their obligations, let it suffice for your instructions that when the time will come for choosing a certain state you may remember his words and ponder well on the subject beforehand, nor proceed blindly in an affair of such moment. Let us suppose, now, that the time has come for some to deliberate on the selection of a state of life. What shall I do? they think. Which one shall I choose from the number already described to me?

I. When actually choosing a state, you must consider whether and how the state you are about to select will help you to your last end.

II. You must consider whether and how that state is in accordance with the divine will.

I. The universal and only end and object that every man must first propose to himself, is *to serve God*, to place his soul in safety, and to gain eternal happiness. With regard to this,

there is no need of reflection or deliberation as to whether I wish to gain this end or not; for that must be, once for all, firmly fixed and determined on: *I will serve God, I will save my soul, I will be eternally happy.* My only consideration must be: What are the ways and means by which I shall best attain that end? When a doctor undertakes to cure a sick man he does not consider whether he wishes to cure him or not, for that is his duty and the object of his skill; his only consideration is, what medicines shall he make use of in order to effect a speedy cure. The ways and means to attain our end is a certain state of life in which we intend to serve God and save our souls. Now, if there were only one state in which we could gain eternal happiness, there would be no further need of deliberation, because every one should then embrace the same state. Now, since there are many different ways in which man can attain his last end, that is, since there are many different states of life in which he can serve God and save his soul, his first thought and consideration must be directed to finding out the state he intends selecting for that purpose. And since eternal happiness or misery depends on it, he who wishes to act prudently must look out for a state in which he can best perform that all-important duty of serving God and saving his soul. Whether the medicine is cheap or costly in itself, sweet or bitter, agreeable or not, makes no matter to the doctor who prescribes it, nor to the sick man who has to take it: the question is whether the medicine has power to restore the sick man thoroughly to health. If I gave to a man suffering from fever a glass of wine, excellent in color, taste, and flavor, the thirsty man would have a great desire to drink it, but it would increase his fever and make him worse; and if I held in the other hand a glass of bitter, ill-smelling medicine, the very sight of it would make the poor man shudder, but it has the power of cooling down the fever and restoring health. Which do you think ought the sick man to choose? Certainly, if he acted pru-

dently and wished to save his life, he would let the wine alone and would drink up the glass of medicine, although he dislikes it. And why so? The wine is better and more agreeable. That is true, but the medicine, bitter as it is, is more profitable for him and more able to help him to attain his end—the recovery of his health. The same thing holds good in the deliberation and choice of a state of life. Our last end must always be the first thing in our thoughts. Whatever state seems to us best suited to that is the best and safest for us, and consequently it must be selected by every one who wishes to act prudently and save his soul.

Having thus far considered the matter, have I done enough, and can I make my choice at once? For instance, after full deliberation, I find that the Religious life in this or that well-ordered convent is the surest means of serving God and going to heaven. Must I, then, at once come to a conclusion, without further reflection, and say: I will become a Religious? By no means; I have not reflected half enough yet. And what more is there to do? I must see whether the Religious life in a convent is better and more helpful for me and for my nature, to the service of God and the salvation of my soul; for what is good for one man is often bad for another, although both have the same end in view. There are different states of life, just as there are different kinds of food. No matter how good, savory, and agreeable a certain article of diet may be, it will not suit every stomach; what is good for one may be very injurious to another. He who has a weak stomach is more benefited by a glass of good wine and by well-cooked food, than by all the doctor's medicine; while one who suffers from fever would find the good wine and cooking highly injurious to him. In the same way, the same state of life is not suited for all Christians.

Besides, I must see whether I have strength enough for that state of life, whether I have talents and ability enough to undergo the duties of it, and do what the rules of the Order require.

I must see whether I have courage enough to endure its difficulties and trials, and whether I have the means and opportunities of embracing that state which will best lead me to my last end. Such is the warning that Christ gives by a simile: "Which of you, having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it?" (Luke 16 : 28.) The Gospel says of Peter that, when he saw the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Thabor, "not knowing what he said," what did he say? "Let us make three tabernacles" (Luke 9 : 33). What are you thinking of, Peter? Will you attempt to do what you have never learned? You have learned only how to make nets, and now you wish to build a tabernacle? It is certainly a mistake for a man to undertake a duty for which he has neither ability nor knowledge.

The same may be said of many thoughtless sons and daughters, when they are choosing a state of life; for the very first idea that comes into their minds, the first opportunity that offers, whether for marriage, or for the Religious life, they blindly seize upon, and make up their minds at once, without thinking what sort of a state it is, and whether they can fulfil its duties or not. Afterwards, when it is too late, they repent of their thoughtless determination, or they suffer from continual discontent and live in a continual martyrdom; or, if possible, they abandon that state altogether. They did not know what they were doing. They began the building without reckoning the expense, and they are unable to finish it. They tried to build a tabernacle for themselves without having learned the art of building. From this many parents can learn how far more grievously they sin against God and against their children's salvation when they usurp the office of the Almighty, and appoint certain states for their children—the priesthood for the son, a convent for one daughter, marriage for another; and thus they predestine their children and spare neither ad-

vice nor exhortations, threats nor caresses, until the latter accept this vocation from them and follow it. Nor does it make any matter to them whether their children have the necessary talents or not for the Religious life or the married state.

Suppose, now, that I know this or that state to be one in which I can more surely attain my last end, serve God, and save my soul; that I have enough strength, gifts, ability, and courage for it, and that I have the means of embracing that state, so that for me and for my nature it would be the means of more surely attaining my last end; can I, then, at last determine and make a final choice? Certainly you have done a great deal, but you have not yet done all. You have still the most important thing to consider, and that is whether that state of life is the one appointed for you by the will of God.

The perfection and merit of a good work, or of a pious practice, does not consist so much in the excellence and holiness of the work itself, as in its conformity with the will of God; in this, namely, that God wishes me to do or omit that work at a certain time, or in a certain place. For instance, it is certainly a far more holy and meritorious work to go to church to pray or to hear Mass than to sit idly at home. Yet, if I am so weak and delicate that the doctor orders me to stay at home, even on Easter Sunday, do I not perform a far more meritorious work, and one far more pleasing to God, by sitting at home than by going to church and hearing even ten Masses? And why? Because at that particular time God wishes me to do the one thing, and not the other. The same holds good for all pious practices. St. Paul the Hermit rendered a pleasing service to God by living alone, fasting, watching, and praying in the desert. If he had spent his time going about the world preaching and converting sinners, which is a far more meritorious work in itself, he would probably not have pleased God so well. On the other hand, the great apostle St. Paul rendered a most pleasing service to God by preaching the Gospel

to the heathens. If he had lived in the desert he would not have pleased God so well, for he says himself: "Woe is unto me, if I preach not!" (1 Cor. 9 : 16.) Whence comes this difference? From this alone, that God wished one kind of service from one Paul, and a different kind from the other.

In the same way, my salvation does not consist so much in the holiness and perfection of my state, or in the assurance of salvation which it seems to give me, as in its conformity with the will of God; namely, in this, that God wills me to serve him in any or every state, although he earnestly desires the salvation of all; but he has decreed to bring men to heaven in different ways. The reason of this is, that the means of attaining our last end are profitable to us, in so far as they bring us where God wishes us to be. Another reason, too, is that since the divine goodness gives every man, who chooses the state pleasing to God, powerful graces to fulfil the duties of that state, if I enter a state against his will God is, so to speak, not bound to give me strength to bear a burden that he has not placed on my shoulders. You may see from this that no matter how holy a state one may select, it is not the best state for him unless it is in conformity with the will of God.

In this matter each one must consult the Father of light, who alone knows what his will is in all circumstances; and here we come back to the first point again, namely, that in the deliberation on and choice of a state of life we must consult God, and God alone. If any one asks me: How am I to consult God, so that he will make his will known to me? I will answer in the words of Christ: "Ask, and you shall receive" (John 16 : 24). Ask for light, and God will certainly give it to you, for he cannot break his word. After having humbly confessed your sins, so that you may be in the state of grace, and capable and worthy of receiving the divine inspirations—"for wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins" (Wisd. 1 : 4)—pray humbly to your God, whom you have

within you during holy Communion, and place yourself in complete indifference at his disposal, between the three states, suppressing all inclination for one more than another, with the sincere desire of selecting whichever one of them is most pleasing to him. Say to him with childlike confidence: Lead me on the way and to the state in which thou wishest me to serve thee.

Imagine that you are on your deathbed, and about to go into eternity. Do now what you would then wish to have done in choosing a state of life. Think that you are standing before the judgment seat of Christ, and that he is about to demand an account from you of your choice of a state of life; what answer would you like to make him? Would it not be a consolation for you to be able to say to him: Lord, I have done what I could. Thou knowest that I placed myself at thy disposal long before; thou knowest that I have often prayed to thee to tell me what to do, and that I entered that state in thy name, with no other object but to serve thy divine majesty and to be happy with thee. If I have erred in my choice, the fault is not mine.

What advice can be given to those who entered on their state of life without consulting God, as is the case with a great number of Christians, or who even entered on their state against the divine will, and who can easily see from circumstances that they are not as God wills them to be, although it is now too late to change? Must such people despair of salvation? By no means. I ask the first, have you hitherto led a good and Christian life, according to your state, and lived contentedly and peacefully, although sometimes you have committed faults through human frailty? If such is the case, you may comfort yourselves with the assurance that divine Providence has so ordained it and has led you to this state. All the more reason have you, therefore, to thank the good God for having in his mercy bestowed on you what you should

have asked him for. If you are, on the other hand, discontented in your state of life, and if you do not live therein according to the divine law, then I say to you: What does a sailor do who is driven away by a contrary wind with all sail set, and who cannot come back? Does he fall into despair? No, he tries to regain by the oars what he lost through the wind. It costs him a good deal of labor, but in the end, and after many difficulties, he arrives in port. In the same way you must act if you wish to reach the city of eternal happiness, the heavenly Jerusalem. You began your voyage with a contrary wind, when you chose a state of life without vocation. Others who consulted him, and followed his voice, are sailing toward their port with a fair wind, while you must labor at the oars. Therefore you must work on with all the greater diligence, constantly overcoming and mortifying yourself, redoubling your prayers and good works, so that you may truly repent of your error, replace what was wanting in your vocation, and daily implore the mercy of God to help you to accomplish your toilsome journey.

Christian sons and daughters, avoid that error in the way I have pointed out to you; let not the ship leave the shore until the wind is fair, until a divine vocation fills the sails. Begin not your journey in doubt, nor before you have asked the true guide, the Holy Ghost, what road will lead you into the promised land, so that you may, without any mistake, reach your last end, and rejoice forever in heaven with God, who called you; a blessing I wish you from all my heart. Amen.

PENTECOST SUNDAY.

THE DIGNITY OF CHRISTIANS, WHO ARE CHILDREN OF GOD.

"If any one love Me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him."—John 14 : 23.

Charity is not merely the real inclination that we have toward God when we awaken to love him, but also, and chiefly, a constant love, or the state of sanctifying grace, which we receive in Baptism from the Holy Ghost, in virtue of which he makes his abode in our souls and remains there until he is driven out by mortal sin. Of each one of us who is in the state of grace Christ says in the Gospel: "My Father will love him as his own child." And now, to our consolation and encouragement in the love and service of God, we shall consider that

By the sanctifying grace which we, Christians, receive in Baptism, we are beloved children of God.

Men have inherited from nature such a great desire of honor and glory, that many raised their ambitious thoughts up to heaven, because they found only men like themselves here on earth, and, as it were, tried to take away the eternal crown from the head of the Almighty, and to place it on their own. Adam and Eve, the first human beings, when they heard the deceitful words of the serpent, "You will be as gods" (Gen. 3 : 5), were so tickled by them and excited to such a pitch of audacity that, in spite of all threats, they forgot the command of their Creator and ate the forbidden fruit in order to become as Gods. Although by that sin they placed themselves and all their descendants in the way of eternal death, yet they have

had many imitators who strove for divine honors. So general was this ambition among the heathens that in order to have a new divinity it was only necessary for vanity to inspire a ruler with the fancy.

What does most excite our astonishment—the unreasoning folly and audacity of these stupid people, or the goodness of God and his incomprehensible love for them? Instead of drawing the sword of vengeance and humbling their pride, he has found a means of satisfying most abundantly their ambition and desire for divine honors. For what has he done? God has become man, so that he is truly adored in human form. So that man can now say with truth, *God is man, and man is God.* But it does not exhaust his love, nor complete our dignity to have only one man of our nature, Jesus Christ, who is truly God; but, the only Son of God having become man, makes many sons of men to be sons of God. For, in Baptism, in which they are regenerated and receive sanctifying grace, all faithful Christians become adopted children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the co-natural Son of God, to whom, as co-heirs of Christ, the kingdom of the Eternal Father belongs, as a lawful inheritance, if they bring that grace with them into eternity.

What honor for us! Have we ever thought of it as we ought? What glory and happiness it is for the children of the world to be the friends and favorites of an earthly sovereign! How proud they are if they can show, in their genealogies or escutcheons, the names of illustrious warriors, cardinals, bishops or statesmen, and say: Look, these people belonged to our family. When Christ said to the Pharisees that he was not of this world, as they were, they immediately appealed to the antiquity of their race, descended from Abraham: "We are of the seed of Abraham;" "Abraham is our father" (John 8 : 33). Whence comes the dignity and nobility of families in our own days? Is it not from their ancestors who, in former times,

made their names illustrious either by valor in war, or by skill in statesmanship, or by other praiseworthy actions, and who were therefore raised to high dignities? And on this account all their descendants are separated from the common people and held in greater honor. Yet, if we consider the matter seriously, how can it be to my praise and honor that some of my ancestors, whose bodies are now crumbling into dust, were great, or skilful, or virtuous people, or were celebrated in their day, if I have inherited none of their virtues or illustrious deeds? And yet such things are looked upon as a great honor and glory. How great are we not, then, oh, Christians! in deed and in reality? How much more reason have we not to boast and be proud of that nobility which the Holy Ghost impressed upon us in Baptism; for we are raised above the Angels and assumed to a share of the divine nature, and we become children of the Almighty God. So that we can cry out, with the greatest confidence, Oh, my God! thou art my Father!

Suppose that a man undertakes a long journey, and on that journey he is burdened with all sorts of trouble and labor, sickness and misery, and is also poor and needy, and knows nothing of his noble birth and extraction; some one meets him and says to him: Sir, do you not know who you are? You are the son of a great nobleman; your father, who is very rich, has ordered me to tell you this and to conduct you to his house. What do you think would be the feelings of that man on hearing such unexpected news? If he were not in danger of being deceived, how great would not his joy be? Would he not think, oh, how happy I am! I am the son of a rich lord! I should have known that sooner; hitherto I have not known myself. This really happened to Don John of Austria. He was brought up in his childhood by an ordinary citizen, whom he always looked upon as his father. When he had grown up, Philip II., King of Spain, who alone knew the secret, was out hunting one day with his courtiers in a forest, where he

met the citizen and his son. As soon as the king saw the latter he leaped from his horse and embraced the young man, to the great astonishment of all present, and to the still greater astonishment of John himself, who, looking upon himself only as a poor boy, did not know what to think of the affair. The king took him respectfully by the hand, and said, "Away with these rags (for the boy was poorly clad); they are not fitting to your dignity. John, you are the son of the great emperor Charles, and I am your brother." Think, my dear brethren, how the young man must have felt, how he must have been overwhelmed with joy; for he was brought with great pomp and magnificence, alongside the king, his brother, to the city and to the royal palace, where he thenceforth received every sign of honor and respect, as the son of such a great father.

Ah, Christians! what a happiness and cause of joy it is for us to be in a state of grace! Come, says Jesus Christ to each one of us, open your heart, raise your mind above the filth of earth to heaven. Why are you troubled on the journey of life? Have you hitherto known who you are? Rejoice, for you are a son, a daughter of a great King; a kingdom is prepared for you, which has neither limit nor end. Come, you are a child of God, and I am thy brother! Hear, ye poor; the world gives you scornful names, and looks upon you as a wretched people, as the scum of the earth; but the great God calls you his children; Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, calls you his brothers and sisters. Do you but serve your heavenly Father truly, be careful not to lose the grace of the Holy Ghost by mortal sin, and your nobility and dignity will far excel that of all the heathen kings and emperors of the world. Principalities, kingdoms, empires, no matter how glorious and magnificent they may be, are as nothing compared to the title of child of God. Dear brothers and sisters, exult and rejoice; we are children of God.

St. Margaret of Cortona, as she once knelt before the crucifix

in meditation on the bitter sufferings of Christ, heard him speaking these words to her: "What dost thou want, my poor little one?" Whereupon she answered: "I want nothing but thyself, oh, Lord Jesus!" And on another occasion, as she was thinking of the immense love and goodness of God to us mortals, she took courage and spoke thus confidently to her Saviour: "Thou hast lately called me a poor little one, and I am so in reality; for every good thing I have in my soul and body is an alms which I have received from thee; but, my dear Lord, when shall I have the consolation of hearing thee call me thy child?" And then she got this answer, by an inward inspiration: "When thou hast cleansed thy soul from all stain by a general confession." For some days Margaret redoubled her penances. She repented of and confessed all the sins and the smallest faults of her life with the greatest sorrow, whereupon she heard, after holy Communion, the sweet and long-desired words: "My daughter." At these words she cried out aloud, "Oh, infinite sweetness of God!" Oh, happy word—my daughter! So has the great God called me.

Would not each one of us rejoice also if we now heard the same words from the lips of Christ: my child, my son, my daughter? But it is not necessary that he should speak to us so clearly, if we only have a conscience free from sin and are in the state of grace, our own conscience will say the same words to us as St. Paul writes: "For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God" (Rom. 8 : 16). "But if sons, then heirs also, heirs indeed of God, joint heirs with Christ," and that is the only thing that a Christian should boast and be proud of. "We glory in the hope of children of God," whether we are of high or lowly birth, rich or poor, honored or despised by the world, matters nothing and is not worth troubling ourselves about; for temporal prosperity cannot cause us real joy, nor can temporal misfortune cause us real misery; we glory in the hope of the children of

God. Our highest honor and greatest happiness, our only joy consists in this, that we are children of God.

But, alas! amongst all the titles of honor and prosperity that are in use amongst men, there is not one less thought of than that of child of God. With what courage, energy, and frenzy are not all the others sought after? We ruin ourselves with lawsuits to gain possession of a handful of earth; whole families dispute about the difference between mine and thine; there is any amount of quarrelling and contention about some ridiculous question of precedence, or rank, as if everything depended upon it; but the title of child of God is willingly given up to any one who thinks it an honorable one. The grace of the Holy Ghost, the divine adoption of us as children, which nothing on earth can equal, is looked upon as of no value; the majority do not think of it, nay, they do not even know what it means, nor have they any idea of the dignity to which it raises them. St. Paul, meeting some disciples of St. John on the way to Ephesus, asked them: "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" Do you believe in him? No, they answered, "we have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost" (Acts 19 : 2). My dear brethren, must I ask the same question to-day? Have you received the Holy Ghost? Do you fully understand this truth, that sanctifying grace makes you children of God and brethren of Jesus Christ?

As long as we are in the state of grace we are children of God. An infallible faith assures us of this, so that parents may say, I must not look upon my children as mine, but as God's, and I must carefully bring them up for the end and object with which their heavenly Father has intrusted them to me: that is, to the praise and love of God. I must be very careful not to lead them to evil by word, or work, or example. I must keep a watchful eye upon all their actions and omissions, instruct them in good, chastise them, as a parent should, when they commit a fault, so that they may not become vain children of

the world, or be led away from the path of the children of God, and be delivered over to the devil as his prey, through my fault. We are children of God. Therefore, the rich and noble may say, I must not look contemptuously on any one, no matter how poor or lowly he may be, but I must consider all as children of God. I am a child of God, each one may think for himself, and therefore I must act as becomes the high dignity of the children of God, as a child of God ought.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

THE LIFE BECOMING THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

"*Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"—Matt. 28 : 19.

All we who are Christians have received this happiness, in preference to so many millions of heathens, that we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. We have received a portion of the infinite nature of God, we are in close communion and relationship with the Most Blessed Trinity; relationship with God the Father, whose children we are; with God the Son, whose brothers and sisters we are; with God the Holy Ghost, by whose grace we are raised to this twofold dignity of children of God, and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

I. By the grace of the Holy Ghost received in Baptism we are children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, therefore we must live as becomes children and brethren of God.

II. Children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ, what

a shame it would be for us to live as children and relations of the devil!

I. Christians, to what dignity are we raised when we are baptized in the name of the Most Holy Trinity? Do we think and believe what a high honor is thereby conferred on us? It is an article of faith; we are children of God, and brethren of Jesus Christ. We are admitted to a participation of the divine nature; do we then acknowledge that this dignity far surpasses all others in the world, no matter how great they may be? Now, if a worldly dignity requires that we should live and behave in a proper manner, how are we to live and behave as children of God? See how great you are and see what you owe. We are children of God; hence we ought to be better and purer than the Angels, since we surpass them all in honor and dignity. What would it help us to be children of God if our lives were not conformable to our dignity? Although you have an illustrious Father, yet that will not be any honor and glory for you unless you imitate him in your life. "If you are children of Abraham," said Christ to the Pharisees, when they were boasting of Abraham their father, "do the works of Abraham" (John 8 : 39), and do not be satisfied with mere words. He says the same to us: "If you are children of God, do the works of God;" live as becomes children of God; let it appear in your manners and behavior that you are children of God.

And what sort of a life must that be? See how the children of the vain world act. They consider that life to be suitable and becoming for them which they see and admire in others of a similar condition to themselves, so that we can see how one seeks to imitate the other in everything. It is the fashion, it is the custom, others of my station do the same, they are clothed in such a manner, they have so many servants, they sleep so long in the morning, they keep such a table, they be-

have so and so in their visits and conversations, in society and assemblies. I am as great as they, and I must do what they do. See, that is what it means to live properly and according to one's station, in the ideas of the children of the world.

Christians! we are children of God by the grace of Baptism, in which we renounced the world and its vain works; we must live, then, differently from the world if we wish to live according to our high extraction and position. We must see, too, how others of the same station live. Now, God is our Father, Christ is our eldest brother, by him we are adopted children of God; consequently, from him we must learn the manners, customs, and usages of our lives. We must carefully examine the attributes of our heavenly Father, that we may reproduce them in ourselves as far as possible, and so be legitimate children of God. Let us live according to our descent, not for the world, but for heaven, which is our inheritance, and let us show forth the likeness of our Father in ourselves. This is the warning of the Son of God himself: "Be ye therefore perfect, in sanctity of life, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

But how? you will say, as Philip said: "Lord, show us the Father." We have never seen him, we know not what he is like. How, then, can we be like to him? Hear the answer that was given to Philip and to us: "He who sees me, sees also my Father." In me you have the image of my heavenly Father and yours. From me you shall take pattern and example, as to how you are to live and to behave according to your high dignity as children of God. Learn of me. What? To be meek and humble of heart, to be temperate and amiable with all who contradict you, to be merciful and patient. He who will come after me must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, as I have done. Then you will be really children of your Father who is in heaven. See how much is said in a few words.

The life and conduct proper for the children of God is the imitation of the life of Christ.

But, alas! how few Christians there are who really practise those virtues! With what reason has not Christ himself complained: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light" (Luke 16 : 8). They are much more energetic and diligent in adapting and suiting themselves to the world and to their equals among the children of the world, than the others in harmonizing their lives with that of the Son of God, and with the lives of those holy children of God who imitated him. How is it with us? How are your lives regulated? "All you who are baptized, have put on Christ as a garment." When Joseph's brothers had dipped his coat in the blood of a kid, they showed it to their father Jacob, and said, "See whether it be thy son's coat or not" (Gen. 37 : 22). If we were now to appear before our heavenly Father to give an account of our lives, and the Angels asked: See whether that man has on the garment of thy son or not; dost thou acknowledge his life to be an imitation of the life of thy Son? what sort of an answer would be given? Ah, what little resemblance there is! How the beautiful robe, that I gave thee in holy Baptism, is soiled and torn! No, I can see nothing like my Son in that man, and, therefore, nothing becoming my children. And how would it be if our heavenly Father were to reproach some of us on account of our perverse and vicious lives, as the Son of God formerly reproached the Pharisees: I do not acknowledge you as my children; you belong to your father, the devil, whose works you do. After I had adopted you as my children, and given you that holy name, not only did you not live according to your dignity, as becomes my children, but you lived as children of the devil. What a shame that would be for us, Christians!

II. Can any comparison be made between the servitude and slavery in which a poor man serves another man, in order to

earn his bread, and that by which a child of God, an heir to the kingdom of heaven, is held under the yoke of the devil? Certainly not. Now, we are the image of the true God; we become his children by adoption in holy Baptism. What reason can ever grapple with the enormity of the shame when a child of God becomes a slave of the devil? And yet, all those who consent to a mortal sin are in this slavery, and with their own full consent and deliberation. What a shameful dishonoring of one's self and one's own high dignity! The bare idea of the son of a rich man sinking so low, through his own fault, that he is reduced to feed swine and to satisfy his hunger with the husks thrown to them, is enough to make one shed tears of pity and compassion; what a pitiful thing, then, is it not, to think that a child of the true God should, by his evil conduct and vicious life, abandon his heavenly Father, lose his eternal inheritance and become a slave to the devil, while his soul is perishing with hunger!

And how many there are who sink to that vile and wretched state for the sake of a momentary pleasure, a little money or a worthless gain. Of such as these may the complaint of the psalmist with truth be uttered: When man was in honor he hath not understood; he hath lowered himself to the senseless beasts, and is become like unto them. Their glory they have changed into the likeness of a calf that eateth hay. So he speaks of the godless Israelites, who, after having been so wonderfully led by God himself in the desert, and after having been protected and fed by him, adored a golden calf as their god. Could not the same complaint be made of most Christians? You adore as many new gods as you have sins and vices. If anger makes you violate the law of God, then anger and desire of revenge have become your god. If you look at a person with an impure pleasure, lust has become your god. Are you proud?

Then pride is your god. Do you eat and drink to excess? Then your sensual appetite, your belly, is your God.

Like St. John the apostle, I cry out to all those who are still in the state of sin and in the slavery of the devil: "Remember, oh, sinner, whence you are fallen; think of the honor and dignity to which you were formerly raised, and the shame and disgrace in which you are now, and, after having considered your wretchedness, resolve with the prodigal son, "How well off are even the servants in my father's house, and I am here among swine." In what an honorable position are the children of God, who love our heavenly Father, as good children ought, of whose number I formerly was; can I not return to them again, if I will? Why do I still remain among the slaves of the devil? I will arise at once, I will hesitate no longer; I will arise and return to my father, by a sincere repentance! I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not worthy to be called thy child! Receive me again into thy favor, and let me hear, to the great joy of the Angels, "I have found again my child who was lost."

But for you, my dear brethren, who are, as I hope, children of God in the state of grace, my conclusion is: Oh, Christians! recognize your great dignity, and, since you are made partakers of the divine nature, be careful not to return to your former vileness by an unworthy life. Such was the warning of the elder Tobias to the friend who was ridiculing his piety: "Speak not so, for we are children of saints" (Tob. 2 : 17). Such should also be the daily teaching and warning of parents to their children, and of each individual to himself: Do not speak so foolishly; leave off swearing and cursing; away with quarrels, abusive language, backbiting, lies, and impure conversation; for we are children of God, who must speak an angelic language. Away with impure imaginations and desires, with thoughts of vengeance, or despair, or pusillanimity. For we are children of God, whose hearts must be always in hea-

ven, with their Father, in childlike confidence and uniformity with his holy will. Let nothing of the pride, impurity, injustice, or drunkenness of the world be seen in your conduct, and avoid everything that has the least appearance of sin; for we are children of God, who must lead a holy life. Ah, Christians! do not forget who you are. Wherever you be, whether you stand or walk, in whatever you do, remember, you are the son of a King; let each of you remember and think to himself, I am a child of God. If you are alone in your own house, think, I am a child of God; my Father sees me, although no one else does. If you are in company, think, I am a child of God, and behave in such a manner that every one may see, from your conduct and conversation, from your temperance and modesty, that you are a child of God. As often as the devil with his temptations, the flesh with its unbridled desires, or other men with their evil example, tempt you to sin, forget not what you are. Think, I am a child of God; I will do nothing against God, my heavenly Father, nor against the high dignity I possess as his child. In prosperity, when everything goes on according to your desire, say, I am a child of God; I value that more than everything else. In adversity, when the sensitiveness of nature prompts to impatience, think, I am a child of God; God is my Father and he will take care of me. My inheritance is the kingdom of heaven; it is there I expect my happiness and unending joy. And that the remembrance of this may be always before you, use these words, for a time, as an aspiration: I am a child of God; I love thee, my heavenly Father. By this means our thoughts, words, and actions shall be such as are becoming Christians, and we shall insure to ourselves an eternal reward. If we are children of God and live as such, then we are also heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, our eldest brother, and with the elect children of God we shall one day possess eternal happiness in our heavenly country, with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Second Sunday After Pentecost.

The Evil of Being too much Occupied.

"*And they began all at once to make excuse.*"—Luke 14 : 18.

The lives of many men resemble stagnant water, which, because it has no motion, generates nothing but worms and vermin. Such is the life of the idle man, who wastes his precious time in mere trifles, and is of no use to any one in the world, neither *to God*, to *his neighbor*, nor to *himself*. The lives of many others resemble a raging torrent that is always hurrying on its course without rest or repose; such are the lives of those who are involved in a multiplicity of labors, cares, and unceasing occupations, and whose efforts are directed solely to temporal things, with a view to gaining possession of perishable goods, or of increasing those they possess already, so that they have no time left during the day to think of working for the welfare of their souls. The parable of to-day's Gospel gives us an exact picture of this kind of people. The guests who were invited could not even spare time to come to the great feast. And why was that? "I have bought a farm," said one, "and I must needs go out and see it." Said the second: "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them." The third said: "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Thus, "they began all at once to make excuse," and not one of them tasted the supper to which they were all invited. Now, my dear brethren, although a life of that kind does not seem to lead to sin as much as an idle life, yet it is not a Christian life, and cannot lead to heaven.

A life that is too full of earthly cares and troubles is, in

the sight of God, an idle, useless, and therefore unchristian life.

I do not speak now of those occupations which are unlawful and contrary to the Christian law, but of temporal cares that are usual amongst men, and are not bad in themselves, nor are used for a bad purpose; of domestic employments that are lawful and even necessary for the support of one's family and to keep up one's position; of occupations such as are usual among servants in their daily work and attendance on their masters, among workmen in their workshops, among traders in their business, among lawyers and attorneys in the cases intrusted to them, among officials in their employments, among the higher authorities in their efforts for the common weal, in a word, among all men in what concerns their daily temporal occupations.

Now, when a man gives himself to such occupations so much that he has his hands and his thoughts full of them, so that he has no time to recollect himself during the day, and to do something for the service of God and the salvation of his soul, such a life is an idle, uesless, and therefore unchristian life in the sight of God; not because the time is spent in doing nothing, but because too much is done, so that there is no leisure for the most important occupation of all, and that which ought to be done first.

The end for which alone we are created and placed in this world is to know God, to love him above all things with our whole heart, and thereby to work out our salvation. This is the chief business of all men, without exception, no matter what may be their age, state, or condition. Besides, you must all confess that the greater and more important a business is, the more time, diligence, care, labor, and attention it requires; the greater the good we hope to gain by success, the greater the loss and injury we have to dread if we fail. Further, you must

also admit that a man, no matter what he may be, can have no greater or more important business in the world than the care of his soul and the service of God, for on that alone it depends whether he is to rejoice forever with his God in a place of endless delights, or to be tortured forever with the demons in an abyss of all imaginable torments. "For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul," after all his labor and trouble? "Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" (Matth. 16 : 26.)

And now I ask you, is it credible that those men who, as I have said, are too much given to worldly cares and occupations, and who spend day after day, and year after year, in them, can give the necessary care to the great and most important business of their souls? How is it possible for them to do so? If a man takes any business really to heart, he devotes his time and attention to it. If I want to work out something that is of great importance to me, I think and study about it for hours to see how I shall begin it; it is in my mind almost all day and night. Now, how much thought, consideration, care, labor, and diligence do men who are busied with worldly things give to the business of their souls during the day? They give the least possible time, nay, they can hardly spare a serious thought for it; nor can it well be otherwise, because our understanding is limited and cannot attend to two different things at the same time, so as to give each the proper share of attention.

When the Israelites were a source of great trouble to Pharao, king of Egypt, and were asking leave, through Moses their prophet, to go into the wilderness to worship God, what did Pharao do to distract their minds from that thought? He told his officers to double the tasks of the Israelites, so that they should not have a moment's idleness: "Let them be oppressed with works," he said; "for they are idle, and therefore they cry, saying: 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Therefore, let them be oppressed with works, and let them fulfil them, that

they may not regard lying words" (Exod. 5 : 8), that they may not have time to think of their God and of sacrificing to him. The infernal Pharao uses the same crafty plan to keep most men of the world away from the service of God and the care of their souls; he thinks: I will give them plenty of work. Early in the morning, when they awake, I will fill their minds with all sorts of business and domestic cares, and so I will take away from God the best part of the day, which he especially wishes for. During the whole day they must remain busied in their shops or offices, so that they will have no time to think of God and of their immortal souls seriously and earnestly. Out of the twenty-four hours of the day these men can hardly find one in which to hear Mass; they have no time to collect their thoughts so as to make the good intention of offering up their work to God, and thereby increasing their merit; no time in the evening before going to rest to thank God, to examine their conscience and to purify it from sin by renewing their contrition; no time during the Sundays to hear a sermon; no time during the month to approach the Sacraments, to cleanse themselves from sin and to strengthen their souls with the Bread of life. In a word, their temporal cares and occupations are so numerous that they have hardly any time left to seek the kingdom of God. Find, if you can, the spirit of devotion amongst those Christians who are buried in worldly cares! Devotion, indeed, zeal and love for God! Where could you discover a trace of that in such people? Certainly not in their daily occupations, for they savor of the earth and of earthly things, and of course they can awaken only earthly love and desire. Even in the very devotions they now and then perform, there is no true piety. Such people, as far as devotion is concerned, are like to a sick man who is suffering from consumption, and who is almost wasted away, with pale countenance, deeply sunken eyes, prominent nose, hollow cheeks and short breath; the whole man is nothing but skin and bone, be-

cause the disease slowly dries up all the marrow and vigor of the body. In the same state is the soul of one whom too many worldly occupations deprive of all devotion and desire for heavenly things.

There is another great misfortune that the soul suffers by being too much taken up with earthly things. It can, as a general rule, have no peace or joy of heart, since it is continually disquieted and distracted from morning till night. It enjoys no peace in its understanding, which is filled with all sorts of thoughts and desires and wishes. No peace in its body, which has neither rest nor repose, and is continually fatigued in its search after riches. No peace in its conscience, which is stained with all kinds of faults and sins. So that poor slaves of this kind have no peace with God nor themselves, and, generally speaking, not even with their fellow mortals, from whom they expect and fear many an annoyance and difficulty in their business.

Almighty God does not give his lights and graces at all times, nor in all places, but in certain circumstances, namely, when the soul is prepared and disposed to receive those graces. At least, it is certain that the good thoughts and inspirations suggested by the Holy Ghost, at a time when one is ill prepared for them, have not as much power and influence to move the human heart to good and to effect that good in it, as when the heart is willing and ready to receive them. The great light and grace which in such a wonderful manner were given to St. Ignatius, and changed him from a soldier of the world into a valiant champion of Jesus Christ, would not have been as efficacious if it had come to him when he was still an officer in the army and full of the distractions and disquiet of a military life. But afterwards, when he was lying wounded in bed, away from all human conversation, and was engaged in reading the Lives of the Saints, that was the proper time in which his heart was really prepared to receive light and grace from God,

and to follow the heavenly call in a most heroic manner.

Now, tell me, what time or place for convenient entrance do the divine inspirations and graces find in the hearts of people who are too much occupied in the world? When they are asleep at night, wearied with their work? No, because their reason is then asleep, too. When they are hearing Mass on Sundays? No, for though their bodies are present in the church, their hearts are busied elsewhere with a thousand distracting cares. Perhaps during the day, in the midst of their schemes and plans and undertakings, grace may find its way to them. No, because they are not then engaged in heavenly things, and their hearts are not prepared or disposed to receive supernatural lights and graces. The only opportunity they might give to God to enlighten their hearts and bring them to a knowledge of themselves would be in the sermons on Sundays, but they seldom or never come to hear a sermon, because they have some business to attend to at the time. Another chance they might give to the Almighty to speak to them, would be by frequent confession and Communion. But they have no time for that; they very seldom approach the Sacraments during the year. And would to God that they received them even at Easter with the proper dispositions! But their manifold occupations take that time from them. They might read a spiritual book, or think of some of the truths of faith, of death, of the strict justice of God, of the joys of heaven, of the torments of hell, but they know nothing of those things; they have no time for them, and of course they seldom or never taste the inspirations and graces that God would give them to work out their salvation if they were prepared to receive them.

I admit that you must diligently perform the duties of your state of life, but you should remember that you must perform them with your hearts constantly raised to God. Is that the case with those who are buried in worldly business? You

must know that the will and decree of the Almighty God bind no one to a duty, business, or occupation, that would leave no time for the divine service and for working out one's salvation, for all other cares and occupations, no matter what they are, must be used solely as means to serve God, and to save one's soul. Everything that cannot be directed to this end is useless and worthless. "This, therefore, I say, brethren: the time is short," that we have to live on this earth. "It remaineth that they also who have wives, be as if they had none; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as if they used it not" (1 Cor. 7 : 29-31); that is to say, they who are engaged in worldly pursuits must keep their hearts as detached from them as if they did not care much about them, and reckoned the business of the soul as the only important one.

And what a folly it is to devote one's self to worldly things to such an extent as to lose eternal joys! To weary one's mind, to fatigue one's body, to live in constant turmoil, and to forget one's soul that must live forever! Unhappy martyrs of the world! you wear yourselves out, and spend your lives in working for the world, for something that you must soon leave behind, and you forget that on which everything depends—to work for the salvation of your soul! And for whose advantage do they thus toil and labor? For their children, their heirs and descendants; because they certainly do not require to work so hard and so excessively to support themselves. And what folly that is: to plague and wear one's self out for the good of others, and forget one's self meanwhile! What good will it be to you that others can live and and enjoy themselves on what you earn by hard labor, if you yourself must go into the house of your eternity poor in merits, bare and naked of good works, and in extreme want? Alas, what a poor consolation it will be for you to remember on your deathbed that you have enriched others by your labor, but have nothing for yourself for all eternity! How will you appear before the judgment-

seat of God, when he will demand a strict account of every moment of your life, and will ask you how, and in what you employed it? Will your children, your descendants, your heirs, whom you have enriched at the expense of your soul, be then able to answer your Judge for you, to defend you, and to prove their gratitude for the wealth you left them by gaining heaven for you?

Alas, how you will then howl and weep, like the dying soldier-courtier, of whom we read that in his last moments he was visited by his sovereign, whom he had served for many years with great diligence and faithfulness. The king asked him if he could do nothing to comfort him, declaring himself willing to do all in his power. Ah, said the sick man, be so kind as to give me strength to live only a single hour without the intolerable pain that I now suffer; or if I must die, then see that I shall be able to enjoy happiness in the next life. I ask nothing more from you as a reward for having served you so long and so faithfully. My dear man, said the other, I cannot do that; it is not in my power. God alone can grant a request of that kind. Oh, woe to me, then, said the sick man; unhappy and foolish wretch that I am, I have lost all my labor and trouble for nothing! See, he said to those who were standing round, how uselessly I have squandered the precious time that God gave me to work out my salvation; how I have wasted it in the service of one who cannot free me for one hour from the pain I suffer, nor help me to escape the eternal torments that I have such good reason to fear in the next life. Oh, my dear people, learn wisdom from my folly; give the years of your lives to God, and to God alone, for he alone can free you from the pain and anguish of death; he alone has power to save you from eternal torments. Thus speaking, and full of repentance and sorrow, he breathed his last. Such, too, will one day be the case with all who, through excessive worldly cares, spend their lives for the advantage of others, and neglect their own souls. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE GUILTINESS OF A TOO BUSY LIFE.

"What woman having ten groats: if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it?"—Luke 15 : 8.

By this parable Jesus Christ wished to show the envious Pharisees, who were murmuring against him, because he received sinners, that he had good reason to seek a soul lost in sin, with the greatest eagerness, and to rejoice with the whole court of heaven at finding it doing penance. For his meaning was: If the children of the world give themselves such trouble, and work so hard for a worthless thing, such as a single sheep, or a groat, have I not far greater reason to trouble myself in order to save a soul that is made to my own image, and that I will redeem with my precious Blood? This parable also condemns the folly and blindness of most men who, for the sake of finding, keeping, or increasing earthly and transitory goods. give themselves no end of trouble, while they shamefully neglect their precious souls and their eternal happiness.

A life that in any state or condition, is too busy, cannot be sinless, nor can it lead to heaven, although each and every occupation of the day may be in itself lawful and without sin.

Consider a person who leads an idle, luxurious life; he sleeps late every morning, spends hours before the glass dressing, receives and pays numbers of visits, goes out walking, spends his time in amusing and enjoying himself, and these are the

principal occupations of his life. What think you of it? Is it lawful? Can such a life lead to heaven? But if you consider each of these occupations in itself, you cannot say that any one of them is unlawful or sinful; for it is not a sin to sleep an hour longer than the usual time, nay, it is often useful and necessary, in order to refresh the wearied body; it is no sin to look at one's self in the glass, nor to dress becomingly; becomingly, I say, because it is never lawful to dress in a scandalous manner, even if it be the fashion to do so; it is not a sin to eat and drink what one is fond of, and what tastes well, and if one has a proper intention in doing so, it becomes a work meritorious of eternal life; it is not a sin to visit a friend, nor to be visited by him, for that is often required by courtesy, nay, by Christian charity and mercy; it is no sin to take a walk, nor to play an honest game in company, nor to amuse one's self lawfully; nor is it unlawful to spend a whole day, or even three or four days, in that apparently idle, useless, and luxurious manner, for that is often required in the way of recreation, or to recover one's health or good spirits, and, of course, when the good intention is not wanting, it will conduce to eternal salvation. You may see now that a person who leads a luxurious life may do nothing the whole day long that is unlawful in itself, nay, that he might merit heaven by everything he does. But to make a rule of living in that fashion, to make it one's only occupation, to spend weeks, months, and years in that way—could a life like that, I ask again, be excused from sin? Certainly not; because it is not a Christian life. A life of that kind is evidently an idle, luxurious, effeminate, and, of course, vicious life, that follows the broad road "which leadeth to destruction." Therefore, they who live in that way cannot excuse themselves by saying: We do no harm; all that we do during the day is lawful, and not forbidden. I admit that everything you do is lawful in itself; but if you reckon all up together, and make up your lives of such actions alone, you live

in an unchristian and vicious manner. And that is evident enough from the fact that you do little or nothing of what you ought to do to gain heaven.

You see now that the same answer must be given to the excuses of those who are too much wrapped up in worldly cares. Who can accuse me of leading a sinful life? they ask. I do nothing wrong by being careful in my duty, profession, office or employment. I admit that everything you do is lawful; it is lawful for you to run about here and there, and to be diligent in the service of your temporal master; it is lawful to buy and sell, and to make honest profit; lawful to write, and study, and practise law, and hear what is to be said on both sides of a case; lawful to be careful in the duty one has undertaken to perform; and I grant you even more than that, for not only are these things lawful, but they are necessary to you, and if you do them with the right intention you will merit heaven by them. But, taking them altogether, if you are so buried in them that you neglect the business of your immortal soul, that you have no time to hear Mass, or to listen to a sermon on Sundays, nor to read a spiritual book now and then, nor to approach the holy Sacraments often during the year, nor to say your evening prayers and settle your accounts with God, by the examination of conscience, nor to think seriously of God frequently during the day, that cannot be consistent with a Christian mode of life, nor can it be excused from sin. Your employments, I repeat, are in themselves good, but the fault is that there are too many of them. It is not the nature of worldly occupations, but their multiplicity, that distracts the human heart from heavenly things, chains it down to the world, prevents us from serving God and working for our souls as we ought, and consequently causes the illness and eternal death of the soul. Those men who were invited to the feast had also their lawful and important business to attend to, and therefore they excused themselves from coming. I must needs see

the farm I have bought; I must try the five yoke of oxen I have lately purchased; I must celebrate my marriage feast. Who would not look upon such excuses as valid? And yet God, who compares himself to the master of the house, was so angry at the refusal these men gave him that he declared solemnly: "None of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper" (Luke 14 : 24), that is, shall gain heaven. And why; they had lawful business to excuse them from coming? But the excuse was invalid; no business, no matter how lawful or important it is, should hinder a man from coming, when the Lord invites him to come; it should be abandoned, or else be interrupted or moderated.

If a saintly and learned man like St. Bernard confesses before God that he must write several books to a Pope, on whom God has placed, so to say, the care of the whole world, and to speak in those books of nothing else than that Pope's obligation in conscience to reduce the number of his occupations, and to set aside more time for prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, asking light and grace from above, and communing with God; and that, too, because the first, most important, and only business of our lives is that of our souls; if the holy and learned St. Bernard says that there is no hope of heaven for the Vicar of Jesus Christ, unless he lessens the number of his daily occupations, how can they who are overwhelmed with worldly occupations hope to gain heaven? What words can preachers find impressive enough to arouse the consciences of such people, and to remind them of their duty and of their obligation to change and amend their lives? But, alas! such people do not come to sermons because they have too much to do; their hearts are too much attached to earthly things, and they do not care for the Word of God, which is, however, most necessary for them. A too busy life, although each of its occupations may be lawful, is not a Christian life, nor is it free from sin, nor can it lead to heaven.

Therefore, if any of you here present lead a life of that kind, I conclude in the words of St. Bernard to Pope Eugenius: "Let this warning now suffice for you, so that you will not give yourself always, nor altogether, to external occupations, but will keep some of your heart and some of your time to consider the state of your soul."

If you ask me how you must arrange your occupations so as to perform these two duties properly, and not exceed in either, I will answer you in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice" (Luke 12 : 31). There you have the proper order of things; of two duties that must have the first place, which is the more important and necessary; reason itself tells us this, and no one can deny it. Now, the most important and necessary business that man has to perform in this life is to serve God and save his soul. That conclusion is valid enough. Therefore the first hour of the day should be given to God by prayer, and, if possible, by hearing Mass; the first thought on commencing any business during the day, must be given to him by renewing the good intention; the first day in the week (and thereby I mean Sundays and holydays) must be devoted to God and to the soul alone, by hearing the Word of God in sermons, by spiritual reading, and other pious practices; the first Sunday of every month should certainly belong to God and to the soul, by confession and Communion, as is the custom with pious Christians, nor is it forbidden to receive those holy Sacraments often during the month, for they are the channels by which the necessary grace of God flows into our souls. And as God must be the begining, so should he be the end of all our daily labor, by the evening examen of conscience, if we wish to be truly pious and to take due care of our souls.

If this order were constantly observed, what a great advantage it would bring, not only to our souls, but also to our temporal concerns! How many do we hear complaining and

lamenting that with all their labor and trouble they get on very badly; their incomes dwindle away year by year; their salaries are reduced; their debtors do not pay them; they are not able to pay their own creditors; they find it more difficult every day to keep house. What is the cause of all that? Do you wish to know? Then tell me, first, how do you manage your affairs? Do you give to God what belongs to him? Do you observe due order in your occupations? "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice," for it is he alone who can bless your labors. Do you do that? Then hear the promise of infallible truth: "And all these things shall be added unto you." But if you invert this order and give to God the last, or even no place at all, on account of your many occupations, what wonder is it that he refuses to bless your work, since you refuse to give what belongs to him? "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice;" look after your soul first of all! If you say to me, as St. Bernard represents Pope Eugenius as excusing himself: I cannot observe that order, because I must attend to my business or work, then I answer with the same saint: For that very reason you have too much work, and you ought to moderate it, if you hope to gain heaven.

Have you, then, more to do and to hinder you from serving God and attending to your soul than a Pope, a king, or an emperor, who has the care of a whole country, or of the whole world? We know already the order that one Pope was advised to follow. St. Francis Borgia, who knew Charles V., the celebrated Roman emperor and king of Spain, tells us that that renowned sovereign never allowed a single day to pass without spending a whole hour in the meditation of heavenly things, besides his ordinary prayers and works of piety; and this holy custom he never interrupted, whether he was in his palace in the midst of important state matters, or in the field with his army in all the turmoil of war. One day, while he was engaged in meditation, an ambassador from a powerful sov-

ereign was announced, who desired to see him at once on most important and necessary business, that could not be deferred; but Charles sent word to him that he was engaged in a matter of still greater importance, since he was speaking with the divine Majesty about his soul. The same great and holy emperor used to keep his coffin in his room constantly before his eyes, so that he might remember his last end, despise earthly goods, and live in the fear and love of God. That is the way to seek God first.

Now, if this order could be followed by those who had to rule countries and peoples—and who ruled them well, too—amidst all the turmoil and confusion of a court, each one of us must conclude, my dear brethren: Why cannot I, too, observe the same order, and give to my God the first of everything I do, for my cares and labors are not so great as theirs? I will, then, begin to-day to observe this order, and will continue to do so punctually. I will often call to mind the impressive words of Jesus Christ: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matth. 16 : 26.) Amen.

Fourth Sunday After Pentecost.

The Truth of the Catholic Religion.

From henceforth thou shalt catch men.—Luke 5 : 10.

The bark of Peter is a figure and symbol of the Catholic Church, in which Peter, as chief steward of Jesus Christ, and his successors, the Popes of Rome, were to have the chief authority. The miraculous draught in which Peter, having launched his nets at the order of Christ, caught a countless

multitude of fish at one haul, is a symbol of the preaching of the Gospel, by which Peter and the other Apostles, sent for the purpose by Christ, spread the Christian religion throughout the world, caught a countless multitude of people of every nation and brought them into the true Church. A circumstance which merits our greatest admiration, for it is one which, in itself alone, if we had no other proofs, would show the infallible truth of the Christian religion, and would convince any one that this religion can come only from God; it is a matter which is in itself sufficient to convince and to confound all unbelievers, who either do not believe in the Church, or who have separated from her, or who live as if they really had no faith at all. Since there are, alas! many of the latter class even amongst Catholics, in our days, I shall now try to develop these ideas a little more fully.

Since the Catholic Church is founded on Peter, and established and spread by Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles, in such a way that nothing can overcome her, she must necessarily be founded by God, and be true.

St. Augustine says the Christian religion was begun and spread throughout the world by Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles, with real miracles, or without miracles. If miracles helped to found the Church, then God must of necessity be their author, for he alone is the Almighty God who has nature in his power, who can set bounds to her and perform real miracles; consequently this religion cannot be false, for God cannot approve of and confirm falsehood by miracles wrought either by himself or by others; otherwise he would not be an all-true and perfect God, but one who could and would deceive and betray. Did the Apostles work no miracles in founding the Church? Then that is the greatest miracle of all; for who could imagine that such a work could be accomplished by such men, in such a manner, and with such effect, with such fortunate, permanent

and complete success, if a higher, supernatural and heavenly strength had not helped in the work?

1. First: what sort of a work was it that was about to be commenced? A religion and faith had to be founded and introduced over the whole world into all kingdoms and countries, according to the command of our Lord to his disciples: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations" (Matt. 28 : 19); "preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16 : 20). Not a single nation was to be excluded. "Teach all nations," an entirely new religion, of which the world had hitherto known nothing. A religion which brooks no rival, and which alone is necessary to salvation: "He who shall not believe, shall be condemned." A religion whose mysteries are completely opposed to all other religions then known in the world; and to introduce those mysteries it was necessary to overthrow so much idolatry, so many forms of belief, nay, even Judaism itself, to confound all worldly wisdom and convict it of ignorance, error, and falsehood, to confront all human power and the rage and anger of kings and emperors, and to conquer all by the force of truth, and to root out the old, inveterate manners and customs of all peoples and nations, which they had inherited from their forefathers, and to cause them to be abandoned at once and forever. And yet, that had to happen amongst all the peoples of the world, who had to be completely changed and converted as far as their ideas and morals were concerned. And it all really happened. Just as in the beginning, a single word of God created the world. "He spoke, and it was done." When the world knew nothing of the Christian faith, that faith was announced: "He ordered it to be announced, and it was received."

A faith which appears to go against all reason and which seemed utterly unintelligible to the worldly wise of the time: a faith which teaches, for instance, that there is one God and that in him there are three distinct Persons. How can that

be? who can believe it? If there is only one God, how can there be three to constitute him? If there are three distinct persons, how can there be only one God? A faith which believes in one who is God and man at the same time, so that it can be said with truth, God is man and man is God; a man is Almighty, Eternal, Immortal; God is born in time, he grew up and died as a man; who can understand that? God is immortal; how, then, can he be a man who died? That man is subject to weakness, change, and the miseries of this life; how can he be God, who is unchangeable, impassible, all-perfect, and happy? Yet people, even the most learned and the wisest, were to be convinced of this seemingly contradictory truth, and to such an extent as to be ready to give up all they possessed, even their life's blood, for the sake of it.

A faith which appeared opposed, not only to reason, but even to honor, which was branded with a mark of infamy, inasmuch as its author (as was also necessary to be believed) was publicly seized by the authorities, tried in various tribunals, condemned as a malefactor and crucified. What a stumbling-block for the Gentiles! What an opportunity, and an apparently justifiable reason were thus offered for saying (as was really often said) that Christianity was the religion of the wicked and a cesspool of vice, since its teacher and author suffered the shameful death of a thief or murderer! Yet the world has believed. That a crowd of people should have run after Christ when he changed water into wine, or multiplied the loaves, or healed the sick, the dumb, and the blind, or raised the dead, there was nothing in that to do violence to sound reason; but that so many people should follow Christ after his shameful death on the cross, that is what the human mind cannot grasp.

If, at least, this religion had prepared something agreeable and pleasing, something to appeal to human sensuality and to natural desires; or if God had created for the purpose a new race of people, free from all bad inclinations, then this wonder-

ful work might have been explained, and would have ceased to be so wonderful; just as it is not a matter for great astonishment that before Christ heathenism, and after his time Mahommedanism, gained such influence in Asia and Africa, or that, in later times, Luther, Calvin and other heresiarchs had so many followers in Germany, England, France and other places; there is nothing, I say, wonderful in this; the wonder is, rather, that all the kingdoms of the world did not follow suit. But the real Christian religion, which had to be introduced in those days, was a law severe and strict and opposed to all sensuality; it inculcated the necessity of temperance, fasting, self-denial, and mortification; it called upon men to say: "Blessed are the poor" (Matth. 5). It proclaimed, "Blessed are they who suffer persecution." It said, "Blessed are they who mourn." What sort of a law is that which says to the proud that they must be humble and become like little children; to the avaricious, that they must detach their hearts from earthly goods, and look upon riches as dust? What sort of a law is it that tells the sensual man to mortify his flesh with its desires, to take up his cross daily and follow Christ; that commands a vindictive, injured, and angry man to pardon his enemy and love him, to do good to those who hate him, to pray for those who persecute him. For my part, it seems that this work presents an insuperable difficulty, nay, even an impossibility to be accomplished; or, if a religion that apparently opposes all natural reason, honor, and inclination, finds credence amongst men, then a supernatural Being must have spread it, for such a result could never have been brought about unless by the strong arm of the Almighty God.

Imagine that you are back again in the old heathen times; that you have before you a Plato, who was then a miracle of wisdom, or a Socrates, who was then called the master and teacher of moral virtues. But if one of those dead came to life again, without knowing of what has happened in the world

since his time, and if you were to show him how that work prospered, with all the circumstances before described, how this religion is spread over the whole world, how there is at the present moment no single form of belief that is so general and respected as this; how it is received by great and small, without distinction; by the experienced and the inexperienced, by emperors and peasants, by savages and statesmen; could he ever imagine that to be the case if he did not see it with his own eyes? Would he not be astonished at such a work?

Are they gods, he would say, or men, who have done this? They were men, you would answer; their chief was called Peter; the others were named Paul, Andrew, John, twelve in all. What! twelve men to renew the whole earth? What could twelve men do in a single kingdom; in one country, nay, even in a single town? How could they, then, suffice for all the peoples and nations of the earth? Nevertheless, they were twelve in number who undertook this work; they separated from each other; one went here, another there; they went north, south, east, and west, from one kingdom to another, from one town to another; they presented themselves almost alone before the people, and preached their doctrine to them: "But they went forth and preached everywhere."

But, at least, they must have been twelve powerful kings, he would say, who could frighten people with their glory and power, or bribe them with their money and riches, or compel them by force of arms, or enchant them by their wonderful wisdom and oratory. Twelve mighty kings, indeed! They were twelve poor men, mostly fishermen, who owned not a finger's breadth of land; who travelled about barefoot, without scrip or staff, as their Master told them (Luke 10); who carried all their property on their persons, suffered from hunger many times, lived constantly on alms, and left poverty behind them as their only legacy; whom could they have bribed? Their learning and knowledge, as far as worldly matters were con-

cerned, consisted in knowing how to make nets and to catch fish; they had learned nothing else. From this you may see that they could have had very little authority, either from their own persons or from their lowly descent, or from the person of their Master; for he who sent them forth was looked upon as a malefactor by the world, and was therefore put to death. Peter, indeed, once had a sword, but he, and all the others as well, were forbidden by their Master to make use of it. On the contrary, wherever they came they found everything against them; as their Master told them, they went like sheep among ravening wolves; they were banished from one town to another and driven away; they were dragged before the tribunals, imprisoned, and scourged publicly; he who could deliver them up, living or dead, thought he was doing a service to God. And are these the people who accomplished such a work in such a manner? Yes, these poor, ignorant, lowly, and weak fishermen have accomplished that work; they have made kings and judges tremble; they have brought the world over to their conviction and faith.

One question more, says the worldly-wise philosopher: where did they first begin to preach their doctrine? They must have been simple, stupid people who first believed in them. And you will answer, they began in Jerusalem itself, in the very city where Christ, their Master, was crucified, where his name was still in odium in that city, in which a number of people, from all nations under the sun, were at the time assembled. I imagine that I see these twelve poor men rushing out into the streets on Pentecost day, from the room in which they had hidden themselves through fear. Where are you going to? I ask them; and they answer: We are going to announce to all the people that he whom they crucified is their God; that they must adore him, submit to his law, be baptized and give up their ancient faith as well. But, my good people, what idea possesses you? You will have the same reward

that your Master received on the cross. And yet, a little while after, hardly has Peter opened his mouth, when I see with astonishment the people throw themselves in crowds at his feet, weeping and doing penance, and that three thousand of them are baptized on that very day. After that I see the Apostles going to the greatest city of the world. Peter, I ask, where are you going? I am going to Rome to the Capitol, to the governors and rulers of the world, to the courts of kings and emperors. And what will you do there? I will tell them that they must pull down their false gods; that their religion is a false, devilish, and impious superstition, and that they shall adore the crucified Jesus as the true God. And Paul, where are you going? To the Senate-house at Athens, to the schools of the worldly-wise, to preach the same doctrine. But what a fruitless undertaking that will be! And yet, I learn that their words have produced fruit; a few years later I see the cross glitter on the crowns of emperors and kings, the idols trampled under foot by the common people, the city of Rome, formerly the centre of all kinds of idolatry, become the head of the Christian religion, and all countries of the world full of Christians. They believed, although they were hunted down everywhere, condemned to wheel and sword, crucified, thrown to lions and tigers, cut down in thousands, flayed, and roasted alive, and exposed to every imaginable kind of cruelty; yet "they believed," nevertheless, "the faith was spread abroad." Such is the result of the great work which the twelve fishermen began. It is believed in everywhere, believed in constantly, believed in up to the present moment.

And now I challenge all who have the use of right reason, and I ask them if any one, after having considered all these circumstances, can ever imagine that the beginning, progress, spread, and duration of such a religion can be a mere natural work; if it can come from any one but the Almighty God himself? For my part, I can say to God: "Lord! if there is an

error in what we believe, we are deceived by thee, because this religion is endowed with wondrous signs that can come only from thee." If this religion is founded by thee, it cannot be false; it must be that Church of which thou hast said that no power nor the gates of hell shall ever prevail against it, and therefore it has remained constant to the truth in which it commenced; it could not admit error, for otherwise it would be overthrown in an instant; if it could not admit error, it never required reformation or improvement, so that it is true and must remain true; consequently, all those who have abandoned that religion, or who embrace another form of belief, are not in the true Christian Church, which alone can lead to eternal happiness.

But why have I undertaken this unnecessary labor, you will probably think; what good is it to us, what profit are we to draw from it, why do you speak so to us? Do you think that we have perjured ourselves, or that we are wavering in the Catholic faith, since you make such efforts to convince us of its truth? You might preach your sermon in Turkey, or in Japan, amongst heathens, or at least amongst heretics; it would suit them much better. We are all good Christians here, praise be to God! We believe in the old, Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman faith, and we have never doubted of its truth. It is all true, my dear brethren, and you must forgive me—I have not considered the matter enough, and it seems to me that I forgot, at first, that I preach to Catholics.

Yet, what am I thinking about? On reconsidering the matter, my dear brethren, I must say that my object is not unsuited, or out of place; it is perhaps only too well adapted to some. Although all of you are Christians and Catholics, although all are convinced of the truth of our religion, yet all do not, so to say, believe in its truth: for what proof do we give that we live according to the truths of our religion? How do our works agree with our faith? We believe and profess

one thing, we do and practise another; we are and profess to be Christians, and yet we often live in vice of all kinds, just as if we were the worst of heathens; What do I say! if we really were heathens and knew nothing of the Christian law, it would be no great wonder if, carried away by our wicked nature and evil inclinations, we cared for nothing but satisfying the lusts and desires of the flesh. But to profess and acknowledge such a religion, whose laws are so holy, and at the same time to show nothing of its holiness in our manners and actions; a holiness which makes humility the foundation of the Christian life, while we do not wish to hear of humiliations; a holiness which tells us to take up our cross and bear it patiently after Christ, while we fear the cross as we do the foul fiend; a holiness which commands us to live in meekness, unity, and love with one another, as brethren and children of the one Father, while we live in bitterness, hatred and enmity with each other, and refuse to tolerate the least injury; a holiness which tells us to keep our bodies pure and holy, while we dishonor them by foul passions; which tells us to begin and end everything in the name of Jesus, and our mouths and hearts are full of oaths and curses; that is, indeed, a subject for the greatest wonder, for, instead of living according to the truths of our faith, we rather trample them under foot, worse than the heathens.

Let us hear how St. Augustine represents the Christian Church as complaining of those who are Christians in name only: "Alas! my children," says this mother, "how many persecutions have I not suffered in the first years of my existence! Yet they have not been able to overcome me; I have always been victorious; tyrants have taken the lives of my children, but they could not take away their hearts from me: their limbs were cut in pieces, their bodies were burnt, yet all that could not induce them to stretch forth their hands and offer incense to false gods. Those were days of combat and repeated vic-

tories; but now, in times of peace, when there are no tyrants, nor executioners, no rack, no torture, what a condition I am in, oh, Christians! and where are ye, oh, true-hearted Christians! How many there are who profess to be my children, and who in reality persecute and harrass me with their works? How many there are who require very little threatening or punishment to induce them to give themselves up body and soul to creatures? Nay, even a slight pleasure or trivial gain can lead them to that act of treachery. How often have I suffered!" I repeat it; all the persecutions I suffered in my youth, all that heresies have caused me to suffer since, have not prevailed against me; but the enemies that I now have to contend with I nourish in my own house, and the more they appear to be my friends, the more dangerous they are.

My Christian friends, let us at all events not give any reason for this complaint to be made against us; let us not depart from the sublime spirit of our religion. We are ready to believe its truths to the last moment of our lives, but our lives must harmonize with the laws of our faith; otherwise, what can we expect from the religion that is given to us, but which we dishonor? Alas! what excuse can we offer when God reproaches us, because the faith that the idolatry and heathenism of the most cruel monsters could not overcome, has not been able to destroy the false maxims of the vain world in us, or to root up those evil habits that have taken possession of us? Let us practise what we believe. Let us manifest the purity of our faith by the purity of our lives. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE SINS OF CHRISTIANS.

"*Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*"—Matt. 5 : 20.

If it is sufficient to exclude a Christian eternally from the kingdom of heaven if he is not more just and perfect than the Scribes and Parisees, who were looked upon by the Jews as the highest pattern of justice, what kind of damnation, then, awaits those who, instead of living holier and more perfect lives, live more impiously and irreligiously than the Pharisees, Jews, and heathens in former times? That is, however, the complaint that may be justly made in our times. It would not be difficult for me to prove that the vices of the Pharisees are found amongst Christians, in a far worse degree and more frequently; that is to say, that Christians are prouder, more hypocritical, more avaricious and unjust than the Pharisees were. But I will not confine my subject within such narrow limits as to render it applicable to only one or another of you. I shall seek a wider field, and prove what is applicable to all of us, that a sin committed by a Christian under the New Law is greater and more inexcusable than the same sin would be if committed by a Jew or a heathen. That is

I. The sin of a Christian is greater and more inexcusable than that of a Jew or a heathen, on account of the greater light and helps he receives from God;

II. The sin of a Christian is greater than that of a Jew

or a heathen on account of the stricter obligation he is under to serve God more holily.

No matter who we are, we must all, according to the end of our creation, travel the same road to eternal happiness. In former times Jews and heathens wished to go to heaven, just as we Catholics do now, and the way thither is not less slippery, difficult, and dangerous for us than it was for them. It is true that no one was ever without the light necessary to distinguish good from evil, nor without the divine assistance necessary to enable him to avoid dangers, and to save himself from a fall; and therefore I will not excuse the Jews and heathens so far as to say that they could not be blamed for living a bad life and committing sin; if they did so, it was their own fault, and a just God could always say to them: "Thy perdition is from thyself, oh, Israel." Still, there is a great difference between light and light, between helps and helps. What a small, flickering candle, so to speak, was borne before the former in the dark night, while a clear day and the full blaze of the sun is shining on us Christians! How sparingly and how seldom did they receive the means and opportunities of learning, knowing, and doing good; how lavishly and how often those helps are given into our hands, and how much easier we can recover ourselves after a fall into sin than they could!

And with regard to the light, could not a heathen or a Jew excuse himself, to a certain extent, on the day of judgment, by pleading his ignorance and saying: I have wandered from the way of justice and sinned; I did not know better at the time; I was taught by hidden figures and parables, which I did not understand, and I had hardly any one to explain them to me. But how could a Catholic plead ignorance as an excuse for his sins, and say that he did not know enough? You, Catholic Christians, who have been taught all these truths, not by figures and mystic prophecies, but by the clear Word of

the Gospel of Jesus Christ, interpreted according to its true sense and meaning by an infallible Church, explained by so many holy Fathers and Doctors, and rendered so easy for your intelligence and appreciation by so many sermons and instructions, just as food is prepared for a child to eat; and you are besides encouraged, and almost forced to observe this Gospel and to live according to it, by so many warnings and exhortations, by the reading of good books, by the examples of the Saints. How could you, Christians, if you go astray, plead ignorance as an excuse, since the way is thus smoothed before you and you have nothing to do but what you can plainly see before your eyes, while you have Jesus Christ, your Saviour, to go in front and lead you onward, so that your task is simply to do your best to imitate his life, which is proposed to all Christians as a pattern, and which is the infallible and only way to heaven? Oh, certainly not! "They have no excuse for their sin" (John 15 : 22). So said Christ formerly of the Jews; much more could he say it nowadays of us Christians, who receive so many lights. We sin, not through ignorance, but through a perverse and rebellious will. We are not merely transgressors, like the Jews, but we also contemn and scoff at the Law of God. Like obstinate and disobedient servants, who know their master's will and do not do it, when we commit sin our guilt is greater and more difficult to be excused.

It was more excusable in a Jew if he could not forget or forgive an injury. For in those days what heroic example had men seen to encourage them in that respect? They thought that the law obliged them to love their friends, but not their enemies. They took as their chief maxim that imaginary law of which Christ afterwards said: "It was said to the ancients, thou shalt hate thy enemy" (Matth. 5 : 44), "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." And therefore, when they afterwards saw the first Christians, they looked upon them with astonishment. See, they said, how these men love one another; what extraor-

dinary people they are! But a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ, brought up in the school of the cross, who so often hears from the lips of his master the words: "But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you;" a Christian, who knows well that his Lord and God suffered on the cross for those who tortured and murdered him, how could such a one palliate or excuse his secret spite and hatred, his vindictiveness and jealousy, when he tries to supplant his neighbor, his cursing and calumny when he gives expression to his bitter hatred against his fellow-man?

Is it wonderful that in former times a heathen or a Jew should surrender himself to impurity, sensuality, gluttony, or drunkenness? Such is the question that Tertullian puts to those who, in his time, appealed to the Old Law to palliate and excuse their self-indulgence. In the Old Law there was nothing known of perpetual chastity, and perpetual virginity was looked upon as a disgrace to a family; even the most holy men were allowed a plurality of wives. "Let the flesh have its way, before the coming of Christ," answered Tertullian. "It was not yet worthy of such a great gift as chastity," because it was not yet purified by the Incarnate Word of God, nor washed in his Blood by Baptism and thus raised to a more pure and perfect life. It had not yet been adorned with those glorious titles; "it had not yet been called the body of Christ, the members of Christ, the house of God, the temple of the Holy Ghost." And all these titles now belong to our bodies, since God was born of an Immaculate Virgin and clothed himself with our flesh. Therefore the apostle warns us so energetically that we must hold our bodies in the highest honor, and treat them as becomes the Body of Christ, and that we must not even name sins of impurity, or dishonor by one bad thought a body that is sanctified by and through Christ. If the old written Law, nay, even the natural law, considers sins of impurity as so grievous that, on their account, an angry God

destroyed whole cities and countries, like Sodom and Gomorrha, and deluged the whole earth and drowned every human creature on it, except a few just souls, and condemned the majority, if not all of them, to hell forever; how abominable, intolerable, and inexcusable in the eyes of God must not the impurity of a Christian be who is a member of Christ and a temple of God?

If the Jewish women dressed in such a vain, frivolous and indecent style as is now the diabolical custom in many Christian countries, there might have been some little excuse for them; for they knew nothing of the lowly, humble Gospel of Jesus Christ, nor of the woe that he announces: "Woe to the man by whom scandal cometh;" no matter how the scandal may be given. Nor did they know anything of the new fashion that the apostles, Peter and Paul, introduced amongst Christian women. St. Paul writes: "I desire, therefore, that women dress in decent apparel, adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety, not with plaited hair, or gold or pearls" (1 Tim. 2 : 9). How St. Paul would have thundered forth if he saw the fashions of the world in these days, which cause those who are modest and wish to preserve pure hearts to close their eyes!

Besides all this, we have so many helps and opportunities to avoid evil, do good and save our souls. Poor people! I sometimes think, poor people, who formerly lived in Judaism or heathenism, how ill off you were compared to us Christians! Their Sacraments were only a shadow, a figure of ours, and from them they received the grace of God drop by drop, while we can receive it now, if we wish, like a rushing torrent. If one of them had offended God grievously, he had no other means of gaining eternal happiness but perfect contrition, along with suffering the terrible punishments generally inflicted on sin; while we can be absolved from our sins so easily in the Sacrament of Penance, and may be freed by indulgences

from the punishment due to them. They had nothing as a sacrifice of atonement for sin but the flesh of rams and goats, while we have the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ, an infinite Sacrifice, to offer daily to the Eternal Father on the altar. For them the Lord, as a stern judge, had an iron rod always ready in his hand, when a more serious crime was, generally speaking, immediately followed by the terrible punishment of eternal death; while he deals with us like a mother, who will take the rod in her hands twenty times to threaten, but hardly once to strike. In a word, they were treated as servants and slaves of God; we have the great honor of being brethren of Christ. We are called children of God. But, precisely on this account, I must look at the matter in another light, and say: miserable, wretched Christians! why should you not live holier and love your God more than the Jews and heathens did? How much more inexcusable you are, how much more deserving of punishment, when you deliberately offend your God! So it is; a single sin, committed by us Christians, makes a deeper wound in the Sacred Heart than twenty sins of a Jew or heathen, on account of the greater lights and helps that we receive from God. The same is to be said also on account of the stricter contract that we have made with God, to serve him more holily.

II. Much greater and more hurtful is the injury that I, undeservedly and without cause, suffer from a dear friend, who has sworn constant love and fdelity to me, than that which I suffer from a stranger, who has nothing in common with me, except that we are fellow-men. And that is self-evident. All men, no matter who they are, owe to their Creator a most submissive obedience, respect, and love. No one is excused from this or dispensed from it in the least. This duty is enforced by nature itself. But a Christian is more bound by this duty than other men. And why? Because he, in addition to the

obligation incumbent on all men and enforced by nature itself, has bound himself, by a special and higher title, to the constant love and service of his God. Think, Christians, of the irrevocable contract that you have made with God in holy Baptism, in which he promised to consider you as his children, and you undertook to give him due honor and obedience, as your Father. You then publicly, and in presence of witnesses, protested, with a solemn oath, that you would have nothing to do during your whole lives with the devil and his works and pomps, or with the flesh or the corrupt usages of the world, and that you would always remain faithful to your God. This contract is strengthened by subsequent confessions and communions, although not in express words, yet implicitly it is ratified, approved of, and renewed. No Pharisee, or Jew, or heathen, ever made such a contract with God.

And yet if any of these latter transgressed the divine law they were not to be excused, and were deserving of the eternal punishment of hell. How enormous, then, must your sin be, Catholics! When you sin you do not merely despise the command of God, like a Jew or a heathen, but you also commit a spiritual adultery, and you are guilty of perjury and rebellion against your rightful Lord, to whom you have, in a special manner, solemnly and publicly sworn eternal fidelity. Oh, what a terrible thing it is, says the Lord himself: "Shall he prosper and gain his salvation, who does such things?" "Shall he go unpunished, who has violated a contract?" (Ezech. 17 : 15.) For a Catholic, who has publicly renounced Satan and his works, and given himself soul and body to God, to imitate heathens in sinning, for a Catholic to commit grievous crimes, that is no ordinary violation of the divine Law; it is a spiritual apostasy, an idolatry, an adultery, and a denial of God.

If Jews and heathens are damned on account of their sins, as the Lord declares in the Gospel of St. John: "They have no

excuse for their sin" (John 15 : 22); what has an impious Catholic to expect, who enjoys such perfect light, such frequent helps and graces, such a close connection and relationship with God? If it is true that we cannot enter heaven unless our justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, what kind of a heaven can we expect, or rather, what sort of a hell awaits us, if we are not merely not more perfect and just, but even more vicious and sinful than they? A good Catholic is a branch that grows on the vine, which is Christ: "I am the vine and you are the branches" (John 15 : 5). As long as he is united to Christ he brings forth good fruit, that is pleasing in the sight of God. On the other hand a wicked Catholic, as soon as he cuts himself off from the vine by a mortal sin, is far worse and more useless than an infidel. Why? Because, when he is enlightened by the grace of faith, the Lord can make him into a vessel of honor in his house, that is in the Church, to show his power and goodness; but a false Catholic, a Catholic only in name, who lives according to the world and the flesh, is a disgrace; so that, being cut off from the vine, if he does not repent, he is good for nothing but hell-fire. "If he is not on the vine, he will be in the fire." Such is the threat of our Lord: "And I say to you that many will come from the east and the west," and will condemn you, for they have led better lives with less light and grace than you, and many of them will one day enter the kingdom of heaven. "But the children of the kingdom," who had a right to heaven by belonging to the true Church, "will be cast out into the exterior darkness" (Matth. 8 : 11).

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE USEFULNESS OF ALMS-GIVING FOR THE TEMPORAL WELFARE OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

"*From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness.*"—Mark 8 : 4.

Thus did the disciples speak to Christ. We are nearly in the same position. We are bound by the divine and natural law to help the poor and needy with alms. How can we help them all? is the question that some ask; there are such numbers of poor nowadays. And so none of them are helped. The question of others is: Who can give alms in the desert? That is, in such bad times that one has enough to do to provide for himself? And thus very little Christian mercy is shown to the poor, or it is not shown as generously as it should be. That is a clear sign of a want of faith and confidence in the providence, power, and goodness of God. But almsgiving does not lessen, but increases our wealth.

If you have many children and a small income, yet you can, and even must, give generous alms to the poor; for thereby your worldly possessions will be increased in this life.

A merchant gives up his business because he has a large family, and he wishes to keep his money; you tell him there are many rich people who are willing to borrow from him at five per cent. interest, and to give him security worth ten times the money advanced to them; but he is not moved. He sticks to his former resolution, and says: I will keep my money to support myself and my children, and I will leave them what is over after my death; otherwise I might lose all and become

poor. But you would say to him, have you lost your wits? What is the good of allowing your money to lie idle in your coffers? It will grow less every day, and never increase. Lend it at interest, and it will bring in more for you every year. Invest it, if you want to make anything for yourself and your children; for in twenty years you will receive the whole value of your capital in interest alone, and your heirs can receive five per cent. for it after your death. What is your opinion of this man? Do you think he acts for the best interests of his children?

But you must form the same opinion of those who are hard and stingy toward the poor, on the pretext that they want their money and bread for their children and their families. What is an alms given to the poor? It is the seed that is cast into fruitful ground, and brings in a hundred-fold. What is an alms? It is money lent at interest, nay, even a divine interest, which returns, not five for a hundred, but a hundred for five. "He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord" (Prov. 19 : 17). It is God, the Owner of all things, who comes to you in the person of the beggar and the poor man; it is God who takes the alms from you, as a capital borrowed at interest, nay, at usurious interest. Could you find a richer, safer, or more faithful Lord to whom to lend it? Could you have the least fear of being at a loss through him? Can any one be richer than he, of whom God says that he is his Debtor? Do you, perhaps, doubt that? Certainly you do not see the person of God marked on the poor man's forehead. But hear what the Lord says: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matth. 25 : 40); and what you refused them, you refused me. Christ is in want when you see a poor person; it is Christ who is hungry and thirsty, who is a beggar and naked. He stretches out his hand for an alms, and even if you give him only a penny, a piece of dry bread, or a drop of cold water, he will not refuse

it, but will receive it with gratitude. Jesus Christ cries out at your door: Give an alms, for God's sake, to this poor man; I will take it from you by his hand. I do not ask from you as much as I have given you. I have shed every drop of my Blood for you, and all I ask of you in return is to give a drink of water to my brethren when they are thirsty. I give you my Body as your food, and I will be satisfied with a piece of bread from you, when my brethren are hungry. I have freed you from the prison of hell, and now I ask you to visit and console me when my brethren are in prison. I have saved you from death, and given you life; do you in turn visit me when my brethren are sick. How powerful with God is the love of the poor, or rather the pleasure he has in almsgiving! "God rejoices in heaven" when a poor man receives a piece of bread on earth, although the poor man is filled with shame at receiving it.

I am not surprised, now, that there were kings and queens who visited on foot the poorest of the sick, fed, washed, and attended to them with their own hands, and served them even on bended knees. Nor am I astonished that many other persons of high position were not ashamed to walk publicly through the streets carrying in their hands a napkin containing food and drink from their own table, that they were bringing to the sick poor; nay, that they were not ashamed to beg for the poor from door to door. If we had only a little real faith, if we could only see, as they did, what a great Lord is concealed under the persons of the poor, we should not wonder at all this! And who amongst you, if he saw Christ himself standing at the door begging for alms, would not look upon it as the greatest honor and happiness to give him what he would ask for? He would even share the last piece of bread, the last penny in the house with his Redeemer. Nor would he allow a servant to do it; he would run at once to the door himself and bareheaded, and with the greatest respect would give his alms to Christ. Is

there one amongst you who would send Christ away from his door, with the customary "God help you," under the pretence that he cannot afford to give alms, or that he wants all he has for himself? I do not think that any Christian could be so hard-hearted. And yet our faith assures us that Christ comes in the person of the poor, and that he receives whatever is given to them. Who, then, should not joyfully embrace every occasion of giving alms that presents itself?

Listen, now, ye of little faith, who are hard and stingy to the poor, through fear of being at a loss by them! "He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him" (Prov. 19 : 17). "He that is inclined to mercy shall be blessed; for of his bread he hath given to the poor" (Prov. 22 : 9). "He that giveth to the poor shall not want" (Ibid. 28 : 27). "Honor the Lord with thy substance; and thy barn shall be filled with abundance, and thy presses shall run over with wine" (Prov. 3 : 9). "Give, and it shall be given to you" (Luke 6 : 38). What shall be given to you? "Good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom." Could any promise be plainer or more certain than this? I need not go any farther, for we have experience itself before our eyes to convince us, if we only wish to learn from it. Tell me, have you ever heard any one complain of being poorer, or of having greater difficulty in providing for his children, on account of alms-giving? Go through the whole world, ask, if you can, all the poor, what is the cause of their poverty. Do you think you will find a single one who has been reduced to poverty through practising the works of mercy? You will find illustrious houses decayed; respectable families ruined; those who inherited great wealth now begging their bread; but I need not tell you why. Nay, many a one is reduced to poverty by the very means that he used with a view of enriching himself. But I never hear of any one becoming poor through alms-giving. Show me a single instance in

which a prudent man can complain that he has been deceived in this respect; show me, if you can, children who have been impoverished by the charities of their parents.

On the contrary, I can tell you of numberless cases in which temporal goods have been increased even miraculously, and without the possessor's knowledge, in the hands of those who gave charity to the poor. Do you wish to hear of miracles? I venture to say that at all times, almost, and in all places, miracles have happened on account of generous alms-giving. Read the Lives of the Saints, and you will find instances enough in which they, after having given away all they had to the poor, have sometimes found their barns full of corn, their cellars full of wine, and at other times their coffers full of money, although they knew that a short time before they had neither corn, wine, nor money.

It is related in the life of St. Germanus that when he once met some beggars on a journey he told his deacon to share amongst them all the money he had left, which consisted of three dollars. The deacon, not wishing to give it all away, kept one piece back and divided the other two amongst the beggars. On the same evening Germanus received two hundred dollars as a present. See, he said to the deacon, let this be a warning to you to lay aside your avarice and to put your trust in God; you have not done faithfully what I told you to do to-day; if you had kept back nothing we should now be a hundred dollars richer, and should have received three hundred instead of two.

But, you think, these are miraculous things that happen only to holy people! But, I say they are miracles that occur almost daily, as they who are constantly charitable to the poor experience, for they are blessed in a special, though natural manner. For instance, they get a legacy that they never dreamt of. Their business prospers, or they are freed from losses and misfortunes. They recover lost goods, or get back what was

taken from them unjustly, and so, in different ways that they hardly notice, God rewards them for their charity to the poor. Yes, alms-giving is the most profitable business! Nor can it be otherwise: our God is most faithful, and the promises he makes on this head are plain enough. Even if that were not the case, he is most noble and generous, and will not allow any man to outdo him in generosity. If you do not believe me, try it yourselves. Engage in that business for a time, with a lively confidence that God will repay you with interest. "Try me in this, saith the Lord, if I open not unto you the flood-gates of heaven, and pour you out a blessing even to abundance" (Malach 3 : 10).

But if you do not wish to try it, and if you reject my proposal through fear that you and yours might suffer loss thereby and be brought to poverty, then I tell you, in the name and on the infallible authority of God himself, that you can find no more certain means of incurring the danger you dread—that is, of suffering losses and poverty—than by being hard-hearted or niggardly toward the poor. "He that giveth to the poor, shall not want; he that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence" (Prov. 28 : 29). Sometimes people wonder and complain that with all their labor and trouble they cannot get on; that they fail in business, and suffer losses and misfortunes. How does that happen? I could easily discover the cause of it with some. I should ask them: Are you generous to the poor? Oh, they would say, how can we give much? We want all we have for ourselves. See, that is the reason of it all. When people are niggardly toward God, and refuse to give a penny to a poor man, they lose elsewhere, through the hidden decrees of the Almighty, much more than they save. There can be no luck nor grace where the poor are sent away empty-handed: "He that despiseth his entreaty shall suffer indigence."

What becomes of your excuses now, Christian parents? You say: I have a large family and a small income, and I can-

not give alms. What, have you many children? Then you are in all the greater need of prosperity and temporal wealth and blessings, in order to support and provide for them; is it not so? Invest a part of what you have, so that it may bring you in good interest. You do that sometimes, in spite of your large family, with men who can deceive you. Do you think that God is not able to repay you, if you give your money to him in the persons of his poor? Does he, who is the Creator and Lord of all things, who has so often and so solemnly promised to reward you a hundredfold for your charity and generosity, enjoy less credit with you than a mere mortal? Could you place a better Guardian and Father over your children than the Almighty God? Do you think that he cannot, or will not, protect you and yours, although he protects the ravens and the sparrows, that reap not? Give to God generously in the persons of his poor. "Make over to him the property that you are keeping for your heirs. Let him be the Guardian and Protector for your children. The inheritance that is protected by God is in safety. That is the way to provide for your children's future." Have you two children? Then, according to St. Augustine's advice, adopt Jesus Christ as the third, and feed him at your table. What an honor it will be for you to be the foster-father of the Son of God, to whom you owe everything! What a happiness for your children to have Jesus Christ as their companion, and to be his brothers and sisters by a new title! Do not turn him away; give him to eat and drink, as if he were really amongst the number of your children. It is not necessary for you to give all you have to the poor, and to keep nothing for yourself. But let Christ have his share. "That is the way to provide for your children's future." Only try it; I assure you, nay, God assures you, that neither you nor yours will suffer any loss by it. The saying still remains true: "Alms-giving never brings poverty. It is the most profitable business of all."

I am ashamed to think that I must exhort Christians to be charitable to the poor, by such a wretched motive as temporal gain; as if I wished to make alms-giving a sort of money-making trade. Our thoughts must rise far higher. If everything in the world were lost to us, the eternal reward of heaven ought to be more than enough for us! And now I conclude with the beautiful, oft-quoted exhortation that the elder Tobias made on his deathbed to his son: "Turn not away thy face from any poor person, and the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee. According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care, even so, to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward" (Tob. 4 : 7-10) in this world and in the next, which I wish you from my heart. Amen.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE USEFULNESS OF ALMS-GIVING FOR ETERNAL LIFE.

"*Do men gather grapes of thorns?*"—Matth. 7 : 16.

Literally speaking, no; because thorns are not of such a fruitful nature. Morally speaking, yes. By thorns Christ means worldly riches: "The sower went out to sow his seed; and some fell among thorns; and that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and, going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit" (Luke 8 : 5, 7, 9). We can gather precious grapes of these thorns, if we plant them in the hands of the poor. But it would not be a reward worth considering for a Christian, if he received mere temporal blessings in return for his char-

ity to the poor. Our thoughts must ascend far higher. Alms must bring us in, along with temporal prosperity, a far greater reward. In heaven we expect to receive the interest of the money that we have given to the poor. There we shall be repaid a hundredfold, as I shall now show, in refutation of the excuses of those who say that they cannot give alms, because they want their money for themselves and their children.

Generous alms-giving increases the treasures of the next life. Therefore, it is foolish not to be generous to the poor, through a desire of saving something in this life for one' self and one's children.

When a man goes to a foreign country, intending to make money there, he does not build a house there nor purchase any immovable property. Because he does not intend to establish himself permanently in that country, but to return home after some time; and therefore his only object is to convert his wares into money, or exchange them for something else that he can easily carry away with him, so as to have something that he and his family may live on in his own country. Still more pleased is he, if he finds any one who will give him a bill of exchange for what money he has. To a person like that he is quite ready to give all his wealth, and to pay a percentage for exchange as well. The bill of exchange is far easier to carry than gold, there is less danger of being robbed of it, and he is just as certain of finding his money on his return home.

O man, place your treasure where your country is. And where is that? Not here, certainly, nor in any place on earth; for we are only strangers and travellers in this life. "For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come" (Hebr. 13 : 14). Heaven is the fatherland in which we intend to take up our permanent abode with those who belong to us; and it is only for that object that we live here for a short and uncertain time, in a strange country, laboring to gather to-

gether as much treasure as we can, that we may send it on to where we can enjoy it for eternity. "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth; but lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6 : 19, 20). But suppose, oh, avaricious man, that you grow richer by your stinginess, what will you have for eternity, when you begin the journey to your proper country? That which, according to the psalmist, all men find who set their hearts upon riches. "They have slept their sleep, and the men of riches have found nothing in their hands" (Ps. 15 : 6). You have saved for others, but not for yourself; you have built houses, bought properties, and made money, but in a foreign country, where you have no permanent dwelling, and you have nothing to send before you to your true fatherland.

But, you ask, how can we transfer our possessions to heaven? By a bill of exchange, and we have opportunities of doing so daily and hourly. Where are the merchants who will make the exchange for us? There are enough of them everywhere in the world. The hands of the poor and needy are the holders of bills of exchange, who, if you intrust your money to them, will bring it safely, without fear of loss, and for nothing, too, to your heavenly country. The poor are the merchants who can at once transfer your money to the country to which you properly belong; for they act as agents for their Principal, who is in heaven, and they will give to him, for your benefit, a bill of exchange, which he will pay you a hundredfold when you come to him. And this is the usual wish that poor people express when they receive an alms: "May God reward you hundredfold in heaven!" That wish will at once be acknowledged by the king of heaven, and will be ratified by his own hand, for Christ says: "Sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Matth. 19 : 2). It is Christ who stands at your door ready to receive your alms by the hands of the poor, and to keep them for you; and not to

keep them merely, but to multiply them; so that you may have enough for all eternity. "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord." Why does God say: "lendeth to the Lord?" Because God knows our avarice, and our desire of always adding to our wealth. He knows, too, that no one lends money unless he is assured that he will suffer no loss thereby. For a creditor requires either a mortgage, or a pledge, or a security, before he lends his money. Now, God sees that the poor can give none of these, and therefore he acts as security for the poor man and as a mortgage or pledge for the creditor. You do not trust in him, God says, on account of his poverty. Trust, then, in me, for I am wealthy; be not afraid; you lend to me. The hand of the poor man is in the treasury of heaven, because whatever he receives our heavenly Father takes possession of. And where does he place it? In heaven; and lest, perchance, you might fear that you will make no profit, you will receive a hundredfold all that you have sent on to heaven by the hands of the poor. See what interest you will receive: give to God, in the person of his poor, something of your temporal wealth, and you will receive eternal riches. Give him a little of this earth, and he will give you the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you give to the poor will be yours, and will remain yours a hundredfold.

I again appeal to the judgment-seat of God, before which we must all appear. For what other reason will Jesus Christ, the Judge of the living and the dead, bestow on the just the kingdom of heaven, if not on account of their alms-deeds and other works of mercy? And why will he condemn the wicked to hell, if not because they are wanting in these works? He will say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father," enter into the kingdom that is prepared for you. And why prepared for you? I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked, a stranger, and sick, and you have given me to eat and drink; you have clothed me and visited me when I was sick and in prison, and therefore the

eternal treasures of my heavenly kingdom are prepared for you. But you, ye wicked, have not done those things; therefore, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!" (Matt. 25 : 34, 35). For it was I whom you so unmercifully turned away from your door, when I asked you in vain for a piece of bread; it was I whom you sent away empty-handed and with harsh words; it was I who privately suffered hunger and want at home; you knew of it, and did not help me. "Away with you, accursed," into everlasting fire! And when could that have been the case? Perhaps when Christ was on earth with his poor foster-father and his poor Mother in the cottage at Nazareth. Oh, no; for then but very few would have been able to purchase heaven by such works of mercy! If that were the case the majority of people would have reason to make excuses. Lord, when have we seen thee hungry, thirsty, naked, poor, sick, and in prison? We have never had the happiness of seeing thee. Certainly, you have that happiness every day, as often as you see a poor person: "As often as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matth. 25 : 40).

Oh, how the sinner will then gnash his teeth with rage! How the avaricious man will rave and curse the greed of gold that prevented him from helping the poor, when he sees the just going to heaven, and that, too, because they acted differently from him with regard to alms-giving! Imagine that a splendid property is offered for sale; a miser would willingly buy it, but refuses to do so because he cannot knock a few cents off the price; another man comes up, pays the price required, and recovers all his outlay in the first year from his newly acquired property. How the miser would grieve, then, because he lost such a splendid chance for the sake of a few cents! And so, too, as David tells us, will the avaricious and miserly grieve when they see the glory and happiness of those who were generous in giving alms, as described in the words: "He hath distributed, he hath given to the poor; his justice remaineth for-

ever and ever; his horn shall be exalted in glory;" while the wicked man, "shall gnash with his teeth and pine away" (Ps. 111 : 9), for he shall see and shall be angry. With a little money, he will think, which they have given to the poor, those others have acquired the eternal treasures of heaven! Could I not have made the same purchase as cheaply? The kingdom of heaven was also offered to me for sale! Oh, fool that I was! I wished to save a few cents or a piece of bread, and now I have lost all! "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." Such are the words with which Christ concludes the parable of the rich man who said to his soul: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, and make good cheer," but who had to hear the words: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12 : 20, 21).

And now I come to the customary excuse of avaricious Christians: how can I give alms generously? What will become of my children, and what shall I leave to my heirs? Oh, man of little faith! You ask what will become of your children? Do not forget that generosity toward the poor is the surest way to gain riches for yourself and your children, even in this life, and that it is the best legacy you can leave your heirs and descendants; nay, that niggardliness toward the poor is the surest road to want and poverty. But I speak now only of heavenly treasures. Supposing, then, that you and your family suffer loss through alms-giving, and that it even brought you to want, which would be contrary to the divine promises; is not your soul of more value in your eyes than your bodily ease and comfort? Are you not of more importance to yourself than to your children? Do you not think more of eternal life than of the short and uncertain time that you must spend in this vale of tears? Ah, God help you! you make no diffi-

culty of spending a large sum of money in building a house here on earth, or in buying a piece of land, and you will not give away a trifle to build a mansion in heaven, where you should live for eternity with your children; you will not part with a small sum to purchase your own country in heaven! How many prisoners are there not who say to the judge: Take everything I have, only let me live a little longer! But you do not think: Let Jesus Christ take the tenth, the fourth part, the half of my goods by the hands of the poor, if I can only live forever! You are ready to give away even the necessaries of life, even your last piece of bread, and to beg for the rest of your days if that were required to save your life; but you will not give even of your abundance to Christ, that you may reign with him forever! "Have pity on your soul!"

What will be left for my children? Are you, then, so anxious to leave your children and descendants something in this strange land, that you are ready to appear empty-handed in the land of the elect, and to be banished from it bare and naked? That would be to disinherit yourself, so as to be able to leave something to others. That would be to hate, persecute, nay, murder yourself. If your children get married you give them a part of your wealth, but you are too prudent to give them the whole of it; you keep the better and greater part of it for yourself, so that you may be able to live decently in your old age. And are you so improvident with regard to eternity that you keep nothing for yourself to live on? And what sort are the people you are so anxious about here below? The words of God are still true: "He storeth up, and he knoweth not for whom he shall gather these things." For my children, you answer. Do you know what they will do with your money? Perhaps they will squander in a short time what you scraped together with a great deal of trouble, nay, they may even use it to offend God. Perhaps they will never be in the least grateful to you for it; perhaps, when you are buried, they will forget

you, and not even say an Our Father for your soul. You save up your money for children who will turn out you know not how, and for people who must soon die and follow you into eternity, where you and they will perhaps be separated forever. Provide for yourself, then, first of all! "Have pity on your soul!" You should, at least, treat your soul as well as your children, and not deprive it of what belongs to it. What you are now storing up is for all your children, is it not? But your own soul should be the most beloved child of all; give it, therefore, the best part; make over your property to your true fatherland, by the hands of the poor.

When the Israelites wished to make a golden calf to worship it as their god, Aaron, thinking thereby to dissuade them from their wicked purpose, asked them for all their gold and silver ornaments. The people unhesitatingly did as he requested them, and joyfully brought him their treasures. If he had asked as much from them to build an altar to the true God, or to help the poor, he would hardly have received a single earring. Such is the case, too, among Christians nowadays. If a false idol is to be honored, if a sacrifice is demanded by pride, sensuality, love of comfort and the vain usages of the world, or by vanity and foppery, there is money enough. But come here, you poor brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, stretch out your hands, cry out your wants, beg in the name of God, and promise a hundredfold reward in the kingdom of heaven. Oh, there is nothing for you, nothing for Christ! People want all they have; they have too many children and a small income; God help you! Christians, where is our faith? What are we doing to gain heaven?

My design is to exhort and encourage you to be more and more generous to the poor. Lay up a treasure, then, in heaven as well as you can, by the hands of the poor. Listen to what St. Augustine says: "God," when he asks you to give alms, "does not require you to deprive yourself of your wealth, but

merely to transfer it to another place." If a friend of yours came to your house and saw that you had stored up all your corn in a damp place, he would say to you: What have you done? You will lose all your corn, after having had so much labor and trouble with it. You have put it in a damp place, and in a few days it must rot away. Put it higher up, in a dry place. And you would follow your friend's advice and store up your corn better. Do you, then, refuse to hear Christ, when he tells you to lift up your treasure from earth to heaven, where it can remain with you forever? Amen.

Eighth Sunday After Pentecost.

THE DECENT POOR.

"*To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed.*"—Luke 16: 3.

Well may the steward ask: What shall I do? To lose one's employment, to have nothing to live upon, to be unable to work for one's living, and to be ashamed to beg for it, these, indeed, are circumstances which might easily make one despair. I feel sick at heart when I think of the miserable condition of the decent poor, who are reduced to poverty by misfortune, who cannot work on account of old age, weakness, or sickness, or because they do not know how, and who are unable to continue their business through want of means, while they are ashamed to ask for alms, or to beg their bread, and must cry out with the steward in the Gospel: "What shall I do?" Yet people do not often think of them, because their poverty is little known. Pity for these poor people has induced me to speak in their behalf to-day.

We must especially help the decent poor, according to our means, whenever we can, in preference to all others.

He who, without suffering any great loss thereby, can help his neighbor who is in grievous want, and who cannot help himself, is bound to do so by the law of God, the law of charity, and the law of nature; and if he refuses to give the necessary help, he commits a sin of cruelty that is condemned by all laws, human and divine. The law of God tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 19 : 19); right reason tells us to do to each one as we should wish him to do to us in the same circumstances, and therefore we must not allow another to suffer a misfortune from which we can free him. For instance, a man falls into the water; although he is an utter stranger to you, you seize hold of him at once to save him from drowning. A child falls down into the mud, and commences to cry; you at once help it to get up, although it be the child of a Turk or a heathen. If you acted otherwise you would show great cruelty and hard-heartedness. The priest and the Levite who passed by the poor man who was wounded by the robbers—were they not as cruel as the robbers themselves? Nay, you are even inclined to pity a dog that is in pain, and to give it relief. So says our Lord also to the Pharisees: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 14 : 5.)

Who are they whose cause I am advocating to-day? Are they dogs, or asses, or oxen? Are they heathens or Turks, strangers or foreigners? If they were even dumb animals they would have a right to expect a merciful heart and a helpful hand to assist them in the misery in which they cannot help themselves. But they live in the same country, the same town, and profess the same Christian religion that we do; they have been unfortunate; they are reduced to poverty; but they are redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, as well as we.

They are poor, but they have the same Father in heaven that we have. They are poor, but they hope to have the same inheritance as we hope for from their heavenly Father. They are poor, but they are not on that account of less value than we; perhaps much better and more precious in the sight of God. Now, these people, who are so closely connected with us in many ways, are in want; they are in grievous want, and who can deny it? For, is it not grievous want to be obliged to depend on the mercy of others for the necessities of life, to have hardly bread enough to eat, to be forced to stretch out the hand to implore help from others, and to beg for alms for God's sake? They who are born in poverty can easily endure it, for they are reared in it also; they have received no inheritance from their parents except the beggar's staff, and they only know how to beg, and nothing more. If one of these gets a piece of bread and meat from a charitable person, he enjoys it as much as a rich man would a sumptuous repast, and he is surprised at his good fortune; but if you were to ask him to work and earn his bread, he would probably refuse, for he would prefer to idle about the streets and beg from door to door, as is generally the case with street loiterers. Therefore, I repeat, such people can easily help themselves. But for a man who has been accustomed to better things, who has been brought up respectably, and has hitherto earned his bread by his business, to be reduced to poverty and distress, through a decree of Providence, by some unforeseen calamity, by a bad season, or by hard times, that is, indeed, a hard, a bitter trial, such as no public beggar has to bear. There is no doubt that it is a sadder sight to behold Job, who was formerly so rich, reduced to extreme poverty, abandoned by all, and seated on a dunghill; or to see Tobias robbed of his wealth by Sennacherib, and reduced to great want; or Ruth, born of respectable parents, obliged to sustain herself by gleaning corn in the fields; it is a sadder sight, I say, to behold such things than to see Lazarus, who was al-

ways poor, suffering hunger at the rich man's door. Those who are called the decent poor in our days are in the same sad condition; they have not been born in poverty, but have fallen into it through misfortune; they are as much in want as beggars, but they are not used to it, nor can they make their wants publicly known. Sometimes they suffer more from hunger than beggars do, and, what is worse still, they shrink from telling others of it, and cannot bear to beg for bread, which other poor people do without the least difficulty; or else they venture out furtively to ask for alms, like Nicodemus, who came to see Christ at night, through fear of the Jews, or they make known their misery only to some trusty friend or neighbor. Nay, when something is privately offered to them, they cannot take it without feeling shame and grief. Public beggars shout out their wants in the streets; they exaggerate them sometimes, and thus excite people to greater compassion for them; the decent poor, on the contrary, labor and suffer in secret with their children, and receive less help, as their wants are not so well known to others. Certainly, their poverty is greater than any other in the world!

Oh, you who are able to help them, surely, if you have human hearts in your bosoms, now is the time for you to prove it! St. John says: "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him: how doth the charity of God abide in him?" (1 John. 3 : 17.) How is it possible for such a man to say that he loves God? If it is a sin of hard-heartedness to send away empty-handed one who is not ashamed to beg, how much greater sin is it not to refuse help to those who, through shame, can do nothing for themselves!

The decent poor suffer from the extravagance of the rich, for, while some are thus satisfied with their position, because their families are well provided for, their employments are lucrative, and they can live comfortably, there are many who are in

the greatest poverty, who have large families and heavy debts, and who would cry out with the sick man who sat at the pond of Bethsaida, "I have no man" (John 5 : 7); I have been unfortunate, and have nothing left; no one will look at me now. Now, I know the meaning of the saying: "A friend in need is a friend indeed." Formerly I was able to earn my bread, but now that I am sick there is no one to take pity on me or help me; no one to visit or console me! While some have everything they require, and are quite content with themselves, there are many unfortunate people who might say with the Prodigal Son: "How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger!" (Luke 15 : 17.) Even the wicked are able to spend money on unnecessary things, while I must pine away through want! They indulge their extravagance in dress; they have many articles of clothing that they will never use again, but I have hardly a rag to cover myself! The worms can eat the corn in their granaries, but I have not bread to eat! They have money in their coffers, but I have not a penny! They have costly dishes in abundance, until they turn away from them through sheer disgust, but I can hardly get the plainest food for myself and my children. Even their horses and dogs get enough to eat, but I must eat bread that many a well-fed dog would refuse to touch.

Is it not a shame (if such is the case, and that is what I do not and cannot know) for a Christian to spend his money on a thousand vanities, when he knows well that many of his brethren and sisters have hardly anything to eat and he unfeelingly refuses to help them? How the complaints of the poor, who cry to God for vengeance against those hard-hearted people, who think only of themselves, must re-echo through the clouds! "He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard" (Prov. 21 : 13). What will such people answer on the day of judgment, when Christ will say to them in an angry voice: "I was hungry and you gave

me not to eat"? (Matth. 25 : 42.) Their doom is sealed: "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy" (James 2 : 13).

But what will become of those who not only refuse to assist the decent poor, but who are ashamed of them, and turn away their eyes and hearts from them, and do not acknowledge them, simply because they are in poverty and trouble? And, alas! it is only too often the case, nowadays, that such poor men, instead of being treated with Christian charity, are only laughed at and ridiculed. "As humility is an abomination to the proud, so also the rich man abhorreth the poor" (Eccles. 13 : 14). What will become of those who entrap the decent poor by all sorts of legal chicanery; who allow them to be defrauded, or neglect their just claims, because they are weak and powerless, or weary them by unnecessary delays in matters of justice; who try to make their profit out of the general misfortune in times of scarcity; who raise the price of provisions, so that many are compelled to sell their little property at a loss in order to buy food, thus verifying the words of our Lord: "He that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath" (Matth. 13 : 12). "Fear and tremble, all you who thus take advantage of the poor!" For although you have power, money, and influence, yet the poor have much mightier weapons with which to defend themselves, namely, their prayers and cries for help. Nor will God forget them: "For, requiring their blood, he hath remembered them; he hath not forgotten the cry of the poor" (Ps. 9 : 10). If he, says St. Augustine, is condemned to hell to whom Christ will say: I was naked, and thou hast not clothed me, what place in hell will be kept for him to whom Christ will say: I was clothed and you stripped me? They who have not clothed the naked shall burn with the devil. But where shall they burn who have plundered widows and orphans? Oh, what will then be the fate of those wicked husbands who bring their wives and children to poverty by their intemperance, and

who make away with not merely the daily earnings, but even the clothes of their wives and children, to spend the proceeds in the saloon? Such poor wives and children are all the more to be pitied, since they find so few who will believe and help them, for they are generally treated as impostors when they ask for assistance. Your husband is young and strong, people say to the poor wife; he can support you well enough if he likes. But they never think that it is the young, strong man who has reduced her to want. Alas! we can again say with St. Augustine: "If they who have not clothed the naked shall burn with the devil, where shall they burn" who plunder their own wives and children, and reduce them to beggary?

Christians, let us prove that we are children of the Father of mercy and true followers of Jesus Christ, who had such compassion for the poor! We should make friends of the decent poor especially. But where are we to find those poor people? Ah, that is a question worth asking! Though they are ashamed to appear in public, yet they are known here and there in your neighborhood. "Want goeth before his face" (Job 41 : 13). You can see their poverty in their sunken eyes and pallid faces. And if you really wish to help them you can find ways enough of doing so, either by yourselves or by means of others. "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor" (Ps. 40 : 2). Why does David say "that understandeth?" Why does he not say: Who give to the poor? That we may give also to those who do not ask, through shame. That is not true charity that is forced from us by continued asking. Give alms just as God gives them to you every day. The rain falls upon your fields before even you pray for it. The sun rises while you are still in bed. The tree bears fruit for you while you are asleep. Your vineyards produce wine. All the elements help to support you, although you do not think of them. "Blessed is he that understandeth" in the same way how to give alms to the poor, and to help them, al-

though they do not ask him for help. By giving alms in that way, since such poor people do not appear publicly before your door, like ordinary beggars, you will better fulfil the counsel of Jesus Christ: "That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee" (Matth. 6 : 4) a hundredfold here, and the kingdom of heaven hereafter.

Finally, I address you, poor Christians, whoever you may be, who daily think and say in your secret poverty, with the steward: "To dig I am not able, to beg I am ashamed." "What shall I do?" I have nothing before me, no help, no resource. Must I despair? God forbid! Must I give vent to my impatience and murmur against heaven? Certainly not. What good would that do? Shall I try to help myself by unlawful means? No, that would be a great mistake. "What shall I do?" Shall I call upon God to punish the hard-hearted and wealthy? Shall I curse and revile them? By no means; that would only make matters worse: that would change your temporal misery, by which you can gain heaven, into an eternal hell, where you would be wretched forever. I know what I shall do. "Make friends for yourselves." If no one in the world will help you, or be your friend, if all men abandon you, make friends for yourselves in heaven by bearing your poverty patiently. Select and keep as your Friend the good God, to whom the prophet says: "To thee is the poor man left; thou wilt be a helper to the orphan" (Ps. 9 : 14). Make known your misery to him; place your whole hope in him who provides for the ravens and the smallest worm. "Cast your care upon the Lord, and he will sustain you" (Ps. 54 : 23). "I have been young, and am now old; and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread" (Ps. 36 : 25). Have you offended God by sin? If so, your condition is wretched indeed! But you must say with the penitent Prodigal: I know what I will do: I will arise, and by sincere repentance be converted to my heavenly Father (Luke 15 : 18). Are you, as I hope, in the

state of grace? Then, for your consolation, remember him who, "being rich, became poor for your sakes" (2 Cor. 8 : 9), your Saviour Jesus Christ, who bore poverty for thirty-three years, and had not whereon to lay his head. Think every day of what Tobias said to his son: "We lead, indeed, a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God and depart from all sin, and do that which is good" (Tob. 4 : 23). To you, poor people, I say the same words: Dear children of God, be not troubled nor afraid! It is true that you lead a poor life, but what great riches and treasures you can collect if you fear God and avoid sin! What riches? All the riches imaginable. Look up to heaven and number the stars, if you can; all that, with God himself, will be your portion forever! You say, we shall have it all hereafter, but now we are in suffering and sorrow. And what does that matter? You shall have it in a very short time. Christ said to his Apostles: "In a little while you shall see me" (John 6 : 16), and possess all goods with me. If, then, you have God as your Friend, what more do you want? What has the rich man, if he has not God: and what does the poor man want who has God? Amen.

Ninth Sunday After Pentecost.

THE NECESSITY OF HEARING THE WORD OF GOD IN SERMONS.

"*He was teaching daily in the temple.*"—Luke 19: 47.

Christ taught daily in the temple of Jerusalem, and yet the Jews remained, as before, hardened in wickedness; so that when the Saviour looked on the city his eyes overflowed and he wept bitterly. If thou hadst only known on this day, when

my teaching and instruction are not wanting to thee. Oh, if Christ, who holds the hearts and minds of all in his hands, could do no more than that with his teaching, how can I and other preachers complain that our words often produce so little fruit in the hearts of our hearers? Every Sunday and holyday we cry out, or rather Christ does so through us; how many Christians lead better lives on that account? What is the cause of that?

Many do not come to the sermons;
Many do not come as they ought;
Others do not listen as they ought;
Others do not go away from it as they ought.

I. He who is ignorant of something that he is bound to know, is under the necessity of learning and of being taught. In the ordinary course of nature, no one is born learned. We all bring ignorance as an effect of original sin with us into the world; it is cradled with us, and accompanies us for many years. Parents know by experience what trouble it costs them to bring up their children until the latter are able to take care of themselves. For this reason there are schools, colleges, and universities established to give instruction in all kinds of arts and sciences. Now, if learning and instruction are necessary for natural sciences and vain arts, how much more are they not necessary for the art of living and dying well, and in a Christian and holy manner? Are the former, perhaps, more important than the latter? We learn all other arts with the help of a teacher; is this of such little value that no teacher is required for it? And yet, this is the art of arts, the most important business that can engage our attention, on which our immortal soul and its eternal happiness depend; nay, it is the only business that must of necessity occupy us, the only art that we must be thoroughly acquainted with. I may not be able to speak Latin or other foreign languages, but I can go to heaven, all the same,

with my native tongue; I could even go there if I were dumb and unable to speak. I have not practised dancing, but that will not hinder my eternal happiness; there is no dancing in heaven. I may have no knowledge of law, but I can find my way to heaven. But, if I am ignorant of the one necessary science, that of leading a holy life, then all the others will not help me to save my soul. If I know and practise that science, no matter how inexperienced I am in all the others, then I am learned enough for the end of my creation.

But how many there are who are utterly ignorant of this holy art and science. The greater number of Christians, even those whom the world looks upon as wise, skilful, and learned, are only beginners in the knowledge of what concerns their soul and their eternal happiness. They know very well how to live before the world, according to their station and position, but they are very ignorant as to how they are to live for heaven; they profess, indeed, to follow the law of the Gospel, but they know very little of its different obligations, and much less as to how they themselves should live as Christians. Therefore I have reason to compare such people to monomaniacs, who are mad only in a certain thing, while they can talk for half a day on different subjects without giving any sign of insanity; but as soon as that point is touched upon which is the cause and origin of their madness, then it is easy to see that they are not consistent, and that they have not the full use of reason. Ask him what does he know and think of God, whose infinite majesty is insulted by the least sin; the strictness of his justice, which punishes the sin of a moment by an eternity of fire; the irreparable loss caused by sin; the flight of dangerous occasions, so necessary to avoid sin; the sincerity of the sorrow that is necessary for the forgiveness of sin. Oh, what an idiot you will find him to be in all these things! He will speak and judge of them as the blind man does of color; these things are unknown to him, he does not understand them. Consider his

mode of life, and compare it with the commandments and rules of our faith, and you will find one mistake after another, one error after another, one fall and one sin after another; as if all the things of the next life were nothing to him. And no wonder that he knows so little of them! How could it be otherwise? He never learned that science.

Our understanding is darkened and blinded in the things that concern God, and our soul and its salvation; and it would remain so if it were not enlightened supernaturally; so that we cannot even think anything good of ourselves (2 Cor. 3 : 5). If one has at one time received this light, if he has known something, nay, even all about it, he has lost it all again; for it is another of our deplorable miseries that there is nothing so easily forgotten as the art and science of divine and heavenly things, unless one keeps them always before his mind, and constantly studies and practises them. Even if he still preserves some knowledge and remembrance of them, they are kept out of his mind, his attention is distracted from them by a thousand thoughts, undertakings, and cares. If he does not think of them, if his understanding is convinced of his obligation to regulate his life according to the sanctity of the Christian Law, his will still remains sluggish and inactive. Who can do all these things? he asks himself. Does he take counsel with his own nature and disposition? But that is corrupt and will lead him in quite a contrary direction. Does he ask and follow the advice of one like himself? Then it is one blind man leading another. Does he look to the customs and usages of the world for instruction? Alas! its false maxims are utterly opposed to Christ, and they are consequently lying and treacherous.

So that a man of this kind, of which there are countless individuals, if he wishes to attain eternal happiness, must go to some school in which he can learn how to live piously, or will at least be induced to do so. And what sort of a school is that?

One to which the Catholic Church calls her children on appointed days, and in which good Christians assemble to hear sermons and exhortations. They are public schools, and may be attended by all, great and small, rich and poor, master and servant, learned and ignorant, clergy and laity, men and women, without distinction. They are holy schools, in which only holy things and those that lead to holiness are treated of, namely—how we are to think, act, and labor as Christians. They are safe and certain schools, for the matter treated of in them is founded on the Word of God; the teacher who gives the instruction is the Eternal Wisdom, the infallible God himself. If you look only at the person who stands in the pulpit and speaks, you see only a poor mortal, who is subject to the same faults and mistakes as yourselves; who, like you, is inclined to evil, who can sin like you, and who is sometimes even a more impious and wicked sinner than all of you together; and who, therefore, has himself need of sermons, exhortations, and warnings. But do not forget the office he is entrusted with; in that you will find another teacher who cannot betray you. The apostle says, in the name of all Christian preachers: "For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us" (2 Cor. 5 : 20). It is God who makes use of our tongues to frighten you away from sin, to exhort you to good, and to explain to you his will. The Lord himself says to them: "He who heareth you, heareth me." "For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaketh in you."

God could certainly instruct our ignorant understanding in good; he could spur on our sluggish will in his own Person, as he spoke in the Old Law to his Prophets; but, according to the present and ordinary arrangement of his Providence, he wills that men should be taught and instructed by men, and not otherwise. Thus we see that, although our Saviour appeared to Paul to convert him, yet he sent him to Ananias, who was to teach and instruct him in what he had to do and how he

was to live. This means God now makes use of so generally that St. Augustine says that he would be guilty of rashness who would seek to be enlightened without hearing sermons. Could any one hope to excuse his own ignorance, and to free himself from all the sins he commits against the duties of his state of life; to excuse and exculpate himself from the neglect of so many good works that the Christian Law requires of him, when he seldom or never hears the Word of God preached? You will say that you did not know such a thing was a sin, that you did not think you were bound to perform such and such a good work; but you ought to, and you could have learned it.

II. The frequent hearing of sermons is very useful for the salvation of all Christians, no matter who they are. It is useful to those who are in the state of sin, and to those who are in the state of grace.

1. As far as sinners are concerned, they are compared to persons sleeping, according to the exhortation of St. Paul: "It is the hour for us now to rise from sleep" (Rom. 13 : 11). He who is buried in the sleep of sin, who completely forgets his soul, and thinks of nothing but satisfying his unbridled desires. Sometimes a good thought knocks at his heart, to remind him that he is in a bad state; that the life he has been leading hitherto cannot end well; and yet he will not overcome himself to abandon his wicked ways. The light of the good example of the pious shines in his eyes, but it cannot make them open themselves to the necessity of amendment. His conscience warns him; it calls and cries out to him: What you are doing is not right! It is high time for you to awaken from your sleep and adopt another mode of life. Hereupon he begins to feel disturbed, to sigh and to moan, but falls back again into his former sleep. Then the God of mercy must go to him, and knock at his heart by the living voice of his preacher, in order

to rouse him thoroughly and to exhort him, as the apostle does Timothy: "Preach the Word, be instant in season and out of season," whether it annoys or not, "reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine"(2 Tim. 4 : 2). The preacher knocks, according to divine inspiration. Sometimes he frightens the sinner by the threat of an unhappy death, of a severe judgment, of the eternal fire of hell, unless he repents. Sometimes he promises him an everlasting reward and perfect happiness in heaven. Sometimes he makes him uneasy by describing the infinite majesty of God, who is offended by sin, and the terrible sentence of the divine justice. Or he encourages him by reminding him of the patience, mercy, and goodness of God, with which he is always prepared to receive the sinner. Sometimes he condemns the malice of past sins, or entices to good by portraying the beauty of virtue and the peace of mind that a just man enjoys. Sometimes he cries out: "Be reconciled to God," do penance, or you are lost; restore those ill-gotten goods, leave bad company, give up impurity, avoid the proximate occasion, or you are lost; forgive your enemy, make friends with him with whom you have hitherto lived in hatred and discord, correct that bad habit of swearing and cursing, or you are lost. Such warnings are the pointed arrows that strike sinners in a vital place and arouse them to penance. These are the last means that God himself uses to draw them to him. For, as he created all things by his Word; as he redeemed the world by his Incarnate Word; as he sanctifies men by the sacramental words; so he generally converts the sinner by no other means than his Word explained in sermons.

To this source are to be attributed the many wonderful conversions that have taken place at all times. David, enlightened as he was, did not enter into himself, or do penance, until he heard the accusing voice of the prophet Nathan. Josophat refused to abandon his ill-made alliance until Jehu upbraided him. Augustine was not converted by the acuteness of his

understanding, nor by his daily studies, nor by the stings of conscience, but the truth shone on him through the sermons of St. Ambrose; he was overcome and converted by them. Oh, sinner! whoever you are, do not let yourself be deceived and detained by the devil. Do not remain away from sermons, if you do not wish to persevere in that blindness that puts you in danger of eternal darkness. There is no use in looking for the divine light in any other way than that which God has established for the conversion of sinners, and that is the hearing his Word explained in sermons.

2. Sermons are also very useful for the just, in order to be strengthened and confirmed in justice. A white garment, no matter how beautiful and precious it is, can easily be soiled, it can soon lose its splendor and become soiled unless it is often cleaned; a house, no matter how strong and massive it is, may soon become shaky, if the parts that are injured by wind and weather are not repaired; a fire, no matter how clear it burns, will soon go out, unless you keep it supplied with fuel; a living body, no matter how healthy it is, must have food and nourishment at certain times, or it will soon die. Pious and just souls! what a precious, snow-white garment adorns you, since you are in the state of sanctifying grace! Yet you sometimes fall, through weakness, negligence, and ignorance, into a thousand faults and imperfections, which, although they do not make this garment black, yet stain it each time with spots that mar its beauty and make it less pleasing in the eyes of God. You are the house and dwelling-place of God; but to how many storms are you not exposed—that is, daily temptations, dangers, and occasions of sin? And if these are not constantly opposed, will not the building soon fall down? The Church, in which the Word of God is explained, is the armory from which you must supply yourselves with weapons, in order to conquer the enemy of your souls and to defend yourselves against every attack. Your souls are in a healthy state; the Word of God is

their food and nourishment. If you neglect to give your souls this food, they will get wearied in the service of God, will grow cold and will die through want of strength.

There are many Christians nowadays, many even of those here present, to whom the words of Jeremias might be applied: "The Word of the Lord is made a reproach to me, and a derision all the day." For they who seldom or never hear a sermon during the month, or during six months, or even during the whole year, and some of them because they fear their secret wounds might be touched, or their consciences aroused, or their repose troubled, are afraid of being converted, and of being induced to lead better lives. Wretched and blind people! what other means have you of being enlightened as to your salvation? And yet you deliberately shun the light, like bats and owls! There are others who seldom or never come to a sermon because they think they are wise, learned, and experienced enough. I can read it for myself in books, they say; I have heard so many sermons already that there is no chance of my hearing anything new. Now, you should be more modest; do not be so very proud; granted that you are learned enough; I will believe it with all my heart; but is that a reason why you should not stand in need of the living, inspiring Word of God? His Spirit does not breathe everywhere and at all times, but "it breathes where it listeth," and dispenses its graces. You can hear nothing that you have not heard already. Be it so; but I tell you, confidently, that you will hear many truths that you have not yet perhaps put in practice. You can read them in spiritual books, and perhaps in a better style than you would hear in sermons; that may be true also, but it is one thing to read and another to hear, and it is to this latter that God has, generally speaking, given the power of moving hearts and bestowing the grace of the Holy Ghost. The rain, falling from the clouds, gives quite a different refreshment to the earth, to that which it would receive from artificial irrigation; and in the

same way the word that God speaks to your heart, by the mouth of his servant, is much better able to produce fruit in your soul than the thoughts which your own cleverness and ingenuity suggest to you. "Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes" (Is. 5 : 21), and do not see the deceits by which the devil tries to keep you away from the Holy Ghost!

Finally, there are others who come now and then, when the whim takes them, but not regularly. As if God were obliged to store up the light of his grace, and keep it in reserve for them, until it may happen to suit their convenience to come for it, and even then, too, it would be necessary that the subject treated of be one that is suited to the state of their souls. All sermons cannot treat of all subjcts, nor can all be equally profitable to every one; it may be that there is only one sermon to which God, in his wise decrees, has attached your conversion and the sanctity of your life, and your eternal salvation; and if you wilfully neglect that opportunity, you will never, perhaps, have a similar one again. But, you think, if I miss the sermon I will be told at home afterwards what it was about. That is good, and it is a work of Christian charity; but it is a different thing to hear a sermon second-hand and to hear it yourself: the words that the preacher spoke may be repeated to you, but not the inspirations which God sends to the heart. To say the very least, such carelessness is a sign of a very indifferent appetite, of a very weak desire to hear the Word of God. If we had to do without food for a whole day, either through want, because there is no bread in the house, or because we are compelled to abstain from all nourishment, we should think it a very hard thing; and yet there are many who, through indifference, deprive their souls of nourishment on Sundays and holydays, and they think nothing of it! What wonder is it that they should continue in their sins, or in their tepidity, or in their ignorance?

Oh, what a strict account will not many Catholics have to

give because they neglected so many and such frequent opportunities of being exhorted to good! That we shall see on the day when the Lord will show each one how well and how wisely he acted with regard to all of us; when he will show each one the great graces he had in readiness to bestow on him, if he had heard the exhortations, not of the priest, but which God himself uttered by the mouth of the priest. Poor, unfortunate souls who seldom or never hear a sermon, although they could do so easily enough! They bear about them one of the certain signs of reprobation, since they have no taste for spiritual food. The Infallible Truth has said: "He who is of God, heareth the Word of God;" "therefore you do not hear because you are not of God." But if you are not of God, and have no part in him, of whom are you? Of the devil; a misfortune which God may avert from us all.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

HOW WE SHOULD HEAR SERMONS.

"*Two men went up into the temple to pray.*"—Luke 18: 10.

Two men went to the same place, the temple of God; they went with the same intention, to pray; but how differently they carried it out! The one was a Pharisee, who was looked upon as a pattern of piety; the other a Publican, a public sinner, whose wicked life was known to all. The one was full of secret pride, the other of humility and contrition. The one went to extol himself in his prayer, and to raise himself above others; the other to repent of his sins, and to beg the mercy of God. What wonder is it that they both left the temple in very different states? A picture of many Christians who go into the same church, at the usual time, to hear the same sermon; but

all of them do not return home in the same state. If there are ten of them who derive great profit for their souls, there are fifty who derive much less, and a hundred who have no profit at all. One sinner is touched and moved to penance, another remains as hardened as he was before. One just man is made more zealous in the service of God, the other remains as he was. Whence arises this difference amongst men of the same nature, who hear the same Word of God, preached at the same time, and in the same place? The fault lies with themselves: they do not come to the sermon in the same way and with the same dispositions. To remedy this great defect I will tell you, in to-day's instruction, how you must go to a sermon in order to profit by it. One should go to sermons

I. With a heart well-prepared;
II. With speedy steps.

I. 1. He who sows seed must first carefully prepare the soil; for the seed will bring forth little or much fruit, or no fruit at all, according as the ground is ill or well prepared, or altogether unprepared. "The seed is the Word of God" (Luke 11 : 8). This is sown by sermons; not the ears, but the hearts of the hearers are the ground in which it is sown, in order to bring forth abundant fruit of eternal life for souls. But, no matter how powerful and impressive this Word may be, the whole profit and advantage of it depends mostly on the preparation and disposition of the heart that is to receive it. Not the preacher, but God, is the sower, who speaks by the mouth of his preacher and distributes his graces to hearts. There is no doubt about it. It is neither I, nor any one else, who does the good. God must do it: "Neither he who planteth is anything, nor he who watereth, but God who giveth the increase." Sermons may be as polished, as well conceived, as impressive as you wish, but if the Spirit of God does not enlighten the hearers with supernatural light, those sermons will be as inca-

pable of producing an effect as ice-cold water is of making a fire burn brighter. The voice of the preacher goes no farther than the ears of his hearers; it has then done its duty, and it comes back again, while the voice of God forces its way into the depths of the heart. We may cry out and shout, and make a great noise, in exhorting you to good, St. Augustine says: "If there is no one to teach inwardly, all the noise we make is of no use." There are always two preaching together: besides him whom you see in the pulpit, there is another Preacher in heaven, who with one hand directs the tongue of him who is preaching, while with the other he moves the hearts of his audience. "He who teaches hearts has his seat in the heavens" (Ps. 49 : 2).

2. In what does that preparation consist? In this, that you must cleanse your hearts, like ground that you prepare for seed, from the stones that would prevent the Word from fructifying, and from the thorns that would choke it; that is to say, you must lay aside all other cares, evil desires, and thoughts, and wilful attachments to sin, and you must go to the sermon with no other wish, no other intention, but a true and earnest desire to understand the will of God, to learn the truths taught, and to act according to them. If you are in the state of sin, your first wish must be to understand the deformity of sin, so that you may be moved to true sorrow and penance, and avoid evil in future. If you are in the state of grace, your only object must be to be incited more and more to the love of God, and to his service, to the esteem of virtue, and to the desire and longing for heavenly things. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 8 : 8). What is the meaning of that? Have not all got ears who come to hear sermons? They are not deaf, or they would remain at home. It is true that all have ears, but all have not ears to hear. They who hear must have such ears that they can profit by what they hear and obey the divine will, when they understand it.

Do you bring such ears with you when you come to a ser-

mon? Are your hearts thus prepared, your minds ready, your intentions pure, your desires earnest and sincere? Would to God that it were so! If I might ask each and every one particularly what induced them to come to the sermon, and expect from all a true answer, how different would be the causes they would assign, and not one of them conformable to the true object of a sermon! Some could not even assign a cause; they go to the sermon, and they hardly know how or why they went; they had simply the desire of following the crowd, of keeping up a custom, of pleasing their fathers, mothers, masters, or mistresses, who ordered them to come and who watch them to see that they do so. There are many simple, good souls, who could give no other reason for their coming except that they wished to hear a sermon, thinking that when they have done that they have performed a good, holy, and meritorious work; so that it is all the same to them whom they hear, what they hear, and how they hear; nor do they trouble themselves about the subject, for their only object is to hear a sermon, and of course every subject is good. That may be all very true, but the good work does not consist therein. If you have no other intention but that, I would not give you anything for all you could gain, even if you heard ten sermons in the one day. The hearing of sermons in itself is not a holy or meritorious work; it is only a means of learning holy things, so as to do something holy and good afterwards; and that is the intention which makes it good and meritorious to hear sermons.

And you others, why do you come now and then to sermons? Is it that you may pass away an hour or so, on Sundays or holydays, which you would otherwise find too long, as you have nowhere else to spend your time? Or is it to satisfy an idle curiosity to hear how the preacher acquits himself of his task, that you may criticise him afterwards? They say, like those people of whom Ezechiel writes: "Come, let us go and hear what he has to say," what sort of ideas and thoughts he has;

as if they were going to see a play! Poor, blind wretches! who only try to satisfy their curiosity, and seek merely for pleasure and enjoyment, where they might find their eternal salvation, and whose only object is to glut their ears, where they might feed their souls and learn what their obligations are and how to fulfil them. I will say nothing of other still more culpable, nay, even wicked motives, that induce many to come, who have not the least idea of amending their lives; but come with the deliberate intention of opposing holy inspirations, and driving them out of their minds. What sort of profit can all those people hope to have? No one is forced to receive grace against his will; he must seek it, desire and long for it.

Bring, then, with you, longing and devout hearts to the sermon! The greater your appetite, when you sit down to table, the better flavor has your food, and the more good it does the stomach. The purer your intention, the greater your desire to be instructed and moved by the Word of God, the more profit will you bring home with you. So that, first of all, before you go to a sermon, or while you are in the church before it commences, you must raise your heart to God. Think to yourself: God is now about to speak to my heart. Sigh and pray in the words of the prophet Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

II. And what is the meaning of that, you ask, to come with speedy steps? The meaning is that you must come in time to the sermon. What prevents a great many from deriving the proper fruit is their sloth and laziness; for some make it almost a habit not to come until the sermon is begun, or even half over. What a great irreverence this is to the Word of God, what advantages it deprives them of, and what harm it does their souls, they can hardly imagine.

1. With regard to the irreverence, tell me: Do you think the master should wait for his servant? or

should not the servant rather wait for his master? If the prince sent you word last night to be in his presence this morning at eight o'clock precisely (for he will await you at that hour, as he wishes to say something particular to you), would you neglect being there at the appointed time? Would you think: there is no hurry yet; I can sleep a quarter of an hour longer; I have still something to do at home; there will be time enough for me to get ready at eight o'clock; the prince can wait a little until I come, or he can talk with his other attendants meanwhile? You would never dream of such things, nor let a word to that effect fall from your lips, for fear some one would hear it. Your anxiety not to come too late would drive you out of bed at four o'clock, so that you might be dressed in time, and wait half an hour in the audience chamber before the appointed hour. But if you knew, moreover, that he sent for you to grant you a favor at the appointed time, how early and speedily you would get ready! Would you allow yourself to be delayed by any other business, no matter how short a time it might occupy? I think not; for, you would say, if I lose this favor now, I may never have such an opportunity again.

I have often told you before that you do not come to church merely to hear the preacher whom you see in the pulpit; otherwise I should have spoken far too audaciously when I brought forward the comparison of the master and servant, and it would certainly make little matter whether you came late or early; there is no use in your expecting any grace from me, I can give you none. It is God, who wishes to speak in and to your hearts by the voice of his instrument; it is he who calls you half an hour beforehand, by the sound of the bell, to his audience-chamber; he is there at the hour that is fixed and known to all, and he waits for his servants, to give them gratuitously certain graces, that is, either to impel them to a certain good, or to restrain them from a certain evil; and if the appointed time is neglected, these graces may never be offered again.

Only think of it for a moment seriously. How many populous cities and countries there are, in the four quarters of the globe, in which God seldom or never speaks to hearts or makes known his truths in this manner? How many millions of men there are who hear nothing of the mysteries of our faith? Have we merited more than they? And we think so little of these graces that it is no great matter to us whether we come too late or too early to hear them. We can easily imagine what they who come late to the sermon would say if they gave utterance to their thoughts: let God wait a while and speak with those who are there with him; there is time enough for me; I will come presently; he can wait, and distribute his graces to others meanwhile; whatever he may have over will be good enough for me. What irreverence, what discourtesy and ingratitude to so great and good a Lord! You might make a great many excuses to an earthly prince to explain the delay, in case you came too late; but could you hope to do anything of the kind with the Almighty God, who knows the secrets of you heart, and understands the reasons of your delay?

If you only had a greater love of God and of his Word you would certainly come earlier! How quickly Magdalen ran to the door when she heard the words: "The Master is here and calls thee." Hardly had St. Peter heard the words: "It is the Lord," as he was sitting in the boat and saw Christ coming along the water, than he leaped overboard immediately, in order to come to him at once. And if you, too, knew that any one whom you love very dearly were at home waiting for you, love would add wings to your footsteps, that you might be there as soon as possible. And see, whenever there is a sermon, your Lord and God is waiting for you, and you delay! And you come a quarter or half an hour too late, while he is in the middle of his discourse! Is that a sign that you have a love and esteem for God and his Word?

And what sort of advantage do you expect to draw from such

bits of sermons? None. Well, then, in addition to the irreverence, discourtesy, ingratitude, and want of love toward God, there is also a loss occasioned to your soul by your coming late. Because, first of all, you are not present at the opening prayer, by which the whole congregation asks and receives the light of the Holy Ghost from heaven—a thing that you need most of all. And in the second place, you are not able to understand the sermon, so that it cannot give you any impulse to good. Imagine that you see two people quarrelling and fighting in the street; the dispute has been going on for some time, and at last you run up and hear how the two are shouting at and abusing each other. They speak distinctly, and you know the meaning of all the words they use, but you do not know the cause and subject of their quarrel, and so you ask one of the bystanders: What is the matter with these two men? But the only answer you get is: Why were you not here sooner, and you might have known all about it? And so you go away just as wise as you came, knowing nothing about the matter, except that two men had a quarrel. In the same way, if you come into the church during the sermon, you see some one standing in the pulpit; he is speaking of all sorts of things, according as his subject requires; he makes use of different comparisons; awakens different affections; sometimes raises his voice with a sigh to heaven, sometimes speaks directly to his audience in tones of pity and wonder; at one time he threatens, at another entreats. And meanwhile you stand there gaping and wondering what it is all about. What is he preaching about? you think; you dare not ask any one, for fear of distracting him, and if he could tell you the subject in one word you would still be ignorant of what has gone before, so that all your gaping and listening is of very little or no use to you.

Again, no matter how good a sermon may be, either in form, or in the instruction it gives, or in the eloquence with which it is delivered, if it is to produce any fruit the understanding must

be convinced, by clear proofs and reasons, of the truth preached, so that the hearer may acknowledge it, and say to himself, yes, that is true, it is right to do this, or to avoid that; and then the will must be moved and excited, by appealing to the affections, in order that it may fulfil the truth; thus, one depends on the other, like the links of a chain. But if you come too late you hear only one part; the chain is broken, the order disturbed; and so how can the truth make the proper impression on you?

Finally, you do not come prepared—that is, with a real desire and longing to hear the Word of God. What would you think of him who, being invited to table, would delay, without cause, until the first and best dishes were removed? You would say there is something wrong with that man; either he has no appetite, or he is utterly indifferent to eating and drinking. Certainly, if he were hungry, he would not require to be asked a second time, nor would he wait for the signal of the bell; his stomach would give him sufficient warning, and the cook must look out if his meal is not ready at the proper time. Is there any reason, then, to think that he has a true desire to hear the Word of God, which is the food of the soul, who, as a matter of habit, without any necessity, through sheer sloth, or because he fritters away his time in useless things, comes too late to the sermon? Oh, certainly not! The whole matter depends on getting up half an hour earlier in the morning.

We see now how you ought to come to sermons: you must come with your hearts well prepared and full of desire to understand and fulfil the will of God; you must come with speedy steps, at the proper time, so as not to lose anything of what is said. When you hear the first sound of the bell, remember what the three holy kings said when they saw the star: "That is the sign of a great King;" come, quickly, let us go to him; God is calling us by that signal; I will go at once and hear what the Lord has to say to my heart. Oh, if every one was always

thus prepared and disposed, what good might be done by a single sermon! What great treasures of grace the divine generosity would lavish on souls! How sinners would be filled with sorrow and repentance, the just with the love of God, the needy and distressed with spiritual consolation, the tepid with zeal, the ignorant with light, and all with devotion!

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HOW ONE SHOULD HEAR SERMONS.

"*They bring to him one deaf and dumb.*"—Mark 7 : 32.

To be both deaf and dumb, how miserable is the condition of such a man! He can neither make known his thoughts to others, nor hear or understand what they say to him. Our divine Lord, moved with pity, as we read in to-day's Gospel, freed one of those unfortunates from his unhappy condition, and gave him speech and hearing together. How many are deaf and dumb nowadays where the hearing of the Word of God is concerned! How many there are who come to sermons and hear and understand as little of them as if they were deaf! How many there are who listen to them and are yet as little capable of interpreting them for their own advantage as if they were dumb! To remedy this twofold deplorable misery I will show how sermons must be heard in order to profit by them. Namely—

I. One should hear them with continued attention and recollection; and

II. With an earnest desire to profit by them.

I. If a great man, or any one, is speaking to us of important matters, we must be very attentive. Even in ordinary

conversation, amongst men of the same condition, it is very annoying to find that the person you are speaking to allows his mind to wander, and does not pay the least attention to what you are saying. Now, what are we doing when hearing a sermon? For what object are we all assembled? Is it not to understand what God wishes to say to our souls? Could any one ever speak with us poor mortals who would be more deserving of reverence and respect than God, who speaks to our hearts by the mouth of the preacher? And of what does he speak to us? Of things that are necessary to our eternal salvation, or, at least, helpful to it. He tells us how we are to live according to the end of our creation, what we are to avoid in order to escape the eternal fires of hell, what we are to do and to shun that we may gain a victory over the enemies of our souls, who are on the watch at all times, in all places, to betray and ruin us, how we are to increase daily our merit and our treasure for eternity, and, finally, how we are to enjoy ourselves with him in his eternal kingdom. This is the end of all Christian sermons and instructions. Could any business be of greater importance or necessity to us? And it is for that very object that we come to sermons; at least, such is the ostensible object of our coming.

Therefore it is evident that the great Lord who speaks, the important business of which he treats, and our own intention, desire, and wish, all exact from each one of us the closest attention and recollection during the sermon, so that we may know and understand what is spoken of; otherwise it would be better for us to remain away, for the very walls and benches of the church would form just as good an audience as we should if we merely allow the preacher's words to strike the ear and nothing more. I am afraid that there are some who do not trouble themselves about paying the necessary attention. Every one seems to attend, the people are all sitting quietly in their places, and no one speaks a word. That is true; but what

about the disposition? Where are the thoughts? There are enough who bring their ears to the sermon, but not their hearts or their minds. These are distracted with all kinds of thoughts and cares, at home or elsewhere; or, if their thoughts remain in the church, they are caught up by some chance object that offers itself, such as, for instance, to see who is coming in or going out, to admire others, and sometimes even to feed their own wicked desires; so that when the sermon is over they are not able to say what it was about. Nay, sometimes they throw the blame on the preacher, and say they could not understand him or his way of speaking. I should not dare to accuse people of such things did I not know from Christ himself how the devil tries to prevent the fruit of the Word of God from coming to those who hear sermons. He presents all sorts of objects before their eyes, he distracts them with a hundred imaginations, he makes them tired and sleepy, so that they will either understand very little, or will receive no profit in their hearts from what they have listened to distractedly and with a divided attention. Christ says: "The devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, lest, believing, they should be saved" (Luke 8 : 12).

If there are only a few who are wilfully distracted and pay no attention, there are perhaps many more who, though not wanting in attention, yet do not take the same notice of everything that is said. The saying of the Wise Man is full of meaning: "A fool receiveth not the words of prudence, unless thou say those things which are in his heart" (Prov. 18 : 2). If anything ludicrous or novel is said, then all are eager to listen; but in other things the attention is not so much strained. See what happens in a theatre: when the curtain is raised there is complete stillness, and all eyes are directed to the stage to see what is coming on; in half an hour's time curiosity begins to languish, the people talk and laugh with each other, so that it is sometimes difficult to hear what is said on the stage. This is

especially the case if the subjects represented are of a serious character and occupy a considerable time, although they may be necessary to the understanding of the play. But the people do not trouble themselves about the latter point. As soon, however, as there is a change on the stage, a new piece, a dance or a comedy, then the attention of the audience is aroused again, and they listen with admiration and pleasure. When the novelty is over they commence to talk again about what they have seen. Oh, they say, that was fine; how well she danced, what a clever play. Ah! how is it that I am forced, by the sluggish desires and weak appetites of many Christians for the food of their souls, to compare the preaching of the Word of God and of eternal truths to a vain and idle play? Yes, God himself was forced to do the same by the prophet Ezechiel: "Thou art to them as a musical song, which is sung with a sweet and agreeable voice; and they hear thy words and do them not" (Ezech. 33 : 32). And the same thing happens nowadays among those to whom God orders his truths to be preached. In the beginning of the sermon, when they who come in time are still in their first fervor, they are all eagerness to hear what the subject is, but bye and bye they grow indifferent; I know what he is going to say, they think to themselves, and they allow their eyes and their thoughts free play, and show by their behavior that they are inattentive. If some story is related, or a striking simile brought in, then they are all attention; they listen open-mouthed, so that it is easy to see that they have become quieter; but when the story is at an end some of them allow their heads to sink down again; they relapse into their former distraction, or begin to think of the story they have heard, without paying any attention to the conclusion to be drawn from it, which is, after all, the real truth that God wished to imprint on their hearts in that manner. "Thou art to them as a musical sound." They hear the Word of God as if it were a play or a profane song!

But is that the way to treat God, who is speaking to us, with proper reverence and respect? I feel ashamed when I think that, if an earthly sovereign speaks to us, we observe a most reverent and humble demeanor, and pay the greatest attention to what he says; although we might easily allow ourselves to be distracted, for no matter how powerful earthly kings are, they cannot see what is passing in our minds. But God is present in the hearts of every one of you, when we are preaching his Word to you, and he knows their inmost recesses. What does he think when he finds your minds so distracted that they are wandering here and there in search of enjoyment and pleasure, and your hearts so cold that you hear everything as if you heard nothing, and allow the principal parts of the sermon to escape you? What does he think when he sees that you are so carried away by distractions that your senses are occupied with other things, while his voice passes by you unheeded, while your thoughts are filled with vanities and sinful imaginations? Certainly the Almighty has reason to complain, as he did long ago: These people assembled before me to hear me, "but their heart is far from me" (Is. 29 : 13).

He who loves his soul and his eternal happiness pays the greatest attention, that not a single word may escape him; he sits, like Magdalen, at the feet of Jesus Christ, to hear his teaching and instructions. How motionless, how attentively, how eagerly did not that zealous soul listen to her Lord? Her sister Martha came up and asked her to help in the work of preparing food for Christ: She said, Lord, dost thou not see that I must work alone, while my sister sits idly there? "tell her, therefore, to help me." And what did Magdalen do? She remained where she was, enraptured with the words of her Lord. She made no answer, not even a gesture of displeasure, although she could easily and modestly have replied: Go away; I have no time now. No, says St. Augustine, speaking of this matter, she did not wish to say even these few words, for fear

of interrupting her Lord: "If she had given any answer she would not have been able to listen so attentively." And therefore she remained silent and immovable, for she knew very well how important it was for her to hear always with the greatest attention whatever her Lord had to say to her.

II. The Word of God, explained in sermons, is the food of souls, by which they are to be maintained in their strength, health, life, and zeal in the divine service. Christ says: "Not in the bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God!" (Matt. 4 : 4.) It is a much more necessary and strengthening food than eating and drinking are for the body; because corporal food, no matter how strong it is, could not raise a dead body to life, whereas the Word of God can raise the dead to life; that is to say, it can move to sorrow and repentance, to confession and penance, sinners whose souls are dead, and it can thus restore them to the life of grace. But now, suppose that there is a table spread with all sorts of viands before me, what good is it to me if I only look at the different dishes, without eating any of them? In the same way, what advantage is it for my soul if I hear a sermon with attention, but do not apply it to myself? "A man of sense will praise every wise word he shall hear, and will apply it to himself" (Ecclus. 21 : 18).

1. There are three classes of people who fail in this particular: the first consists of those who are like the carvers at a table, who have nothing to do but cut up the meats and place them before others, while they eat very little themselves. So, there are some who apply to others what they hear in a sermon, and keep nothing for themselves. Ha! they think, how well that fits such a one! Quite right; it is just what that other wants! He is getting his share of it now! What a pity that such a one is not here; this sermon is just the thing for him, and so forth. But do we come to sermons only to apply what we hear to

others, and that, too, often with a rash judgment? What good is it to you that others should be warned of their duty if you yourself receive no fruit therefrom? You come here to look after your own soul, and not to pronounce judgment on others. Christ says of the good: "They hear the Word and keep it." Although it is impossible to treat of every subject in one and the same sermon, yet, in every truth that is preached, he who is earnestly intent on his salvation will certainly find something good that he can apply to himself with profit.

The very same people who trouble themselves so much about the affairs of others, if their own vices are even barely alluded to, commence to get vexed, to murmur and complain, as if they thought it wrong to allude to them in such a way. If you throw a stone amongst a number of dogs the one you hit will begin to howl. As long as these people are not interfered with they think the sermon a very good one indeed. They wish others to hear the truth; they do not want to hear it themselves. The unjust and avaricious are quite pleased when they hear the impure and the intemperate condemned; but speak to them of giving alms, of restoring ill-gotten goods, or of withdrawing their hearts from the things of earth, and they get quite angry and displeased. On the other hand, a libertine or an impure man listens with pleasure to every sermon as long as there is nothing said of impure love, dangerous company and occasions, mortification of the flesh and of the senses. If the sermon is against drunkenness, it pleases the women, because they are anxious to have their husbands cured of that evil habit, and they think the preacher cannot talk severely enough about it. If, on the other hand, some subject is introduced which touches them up on some sore point—for instance, the vain and frivolous fashions of the day, obstinacy, self-will, disobedience, jealousy, credulity, unfounded suspicions of their husbands, the wasting of precious time, unnecessary visits, the habit of gambling, dangerous meetings, speaking of the faults

and failings of others; oh, then they do not like the sermon at all, and there is no end to their complaints about it. They think that the preacher does not know how people in the world must act.

2. The second class of people who do not hear sermons properly comprehends those who, failing in a different way altogether from the former, act like guests who take their share of everything at table, whether it is good for them or not, although they thus overload the stomach, to their own great inconvenience. There are some who apply to themselves, with a scrupulous anxiety, everything they hear in a sermon, although there is not the least reason for them to do so. So that sometimes a preacher hardly knows what to do, or how to treat of a subject. If he preaches, no matter how carefully, of some consoling doctrine, he cannot reprove the sins of the wicked; if he denounces sin and represents its malice and the way in which it is committed, he disturbs the consciences of the pious and innocent, who take to themselves that which was meant only for others. Alas! they think, full of fear and anxiety, perhaps I have done that, too! Oh, my God, what shall I do? I may not have made a good confession in my whole life! If such is the case I shall never go to heaven; and any number of such absurdities. Although this is a sign of a good and tender conscience, yet it often prevents the proper advantage being derived from a sermon. Perhaps I have done that, too? Yes, perhaps, and perhaps not. What is the good of this perhaps? None, but to fill you with unnecessary fear and anxiety, which will completely disturb you, and make it impossible for you to understand other parts of the sermon that are of real use to you. First of all, you should pay attention to what is said. If an uneasy thought or a scruple comes into your mind, wait till the sermon is over; you will have plenty of time then to think it over and see whether you are really guilty or not, and if you are guilty you can amend your fault. Otherwise you must not

take to yourself what is meant for others; it belongs to them, not to you. St. Augustine furnishes us with a beautiful simile here: he says we must hear preachers and apply their words to ourselves, as if they were letters sent us from heaven. Now, suppose you went to the post office to look for a letter; you ask if there is anything for you, and you are told that you must look for your letter yourself. You do so: there are hundreds of letters lying on the table; you take up the first one, and, after seeing the address, you throw it away, and the same with the second and third and fourth. And why? Because, you say, my name is not on those letters; none of them belong to me. You continue your search, and, at last, you find one addressed to you, and you say at once, this letter is for me, and you take it home and read it. You must act in the same way when you hear a sermon. I know that I am not guilty in this matter, this letter is not for me; here is something in which I must amend my conduct, that I must bring home with me and think over.

3. The third and last class embraces those who resemble guests that neither eat anything themselves, nor carve for others: they occupy themselves in talking, or in admiring the rare dishes. People of this class who hear the Word of God do not, it is true, apply it to others, but neither do they apply it to themselves; their only concern is to hear something new, beautiful, or interesting. What would you think of a sick man, suffering from fever, who, when the doctor comes to bleed him, would occupy himself only with looking and wondering at the surgical instruments of the latter? Oh, what a beautiful lancet! Where did you buy it? Who made it? How much did it cost? Ah, my good friend, the doctor would say, that is not the question now; I am come to restore you to health; it is no matter to you whether the instrument is a beautiful one or not, whether it has cost much or little; the only thing that must trouble us now is to take away the poisonous blood from

you: you need not concern yourself about anything else. Some of us are, perhaps, suffering from a spiritual malady; we are all liable to the fever of evil inclinations and desires! The fever from which we suffer is ambition, or avarice, or lust, or pride, or drunkenness, or impatience, or tepidity. Now, God wishes to make or to keep you healthy by sermons. He uses his divine Word as an instrument to detect the weakness of your soul, to cleanse it from evil inclinations, and to provide it with a remedy against vices and the dangerous occasions of sin, and to draw its desires away from earthly, in order to direct them to heavenly things. Therefore let it not be your sole care to see whether the sermon is a fine one or not; it is not for that you come: your only intention should be to seek the profit of your soul by the truths you hear, to amend your evil ways, and to become more zealous in the service of God.

I conclude with the words of the Wise Man: "A man of sense will praise every wise word he shall hear, and will apply it to himself." Let each one, therefore, ask himself at the beginning of a sermon: "Why am I here?" Why did I come to the sermon? Was it not to draw profit out of it for my soul? Therefore I must pay attention to what is said, and I must and will apply to myself the truths that I have heard and understood. Amen.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

HOW ONE SHOULD ACT AFTER HEARING A SERMON.

'*Go thou and do likewise.*"—Luke 10 : 37.

When Christ had preached the Gospel of to-day and explained to the doctor of the law what he was to do to be saved, and after he had shown him that he should love God with his whole heart and whole soul, and with all his mind and all his strength, he adds: "Do this and thou shalt live." Again, after having told him that to save his soul he must love his neighbor as himself, and having explained how that is to be done, he adds again: "Go thou and do likewise." A beautiful conclusion, if the doctor of the law had only taken it to heart and acted upon it: "Go and do." If Christians nowadays always took to heart the conclusions of the sermons they hear, how much could we not do for the salvation of their souls by our preaching! "Go and do." But when that is not the case, all our preaching and your listening are of no avail. And this is the fault of the greatest number. But I shall try to prove to you that you must take to heart the sermons you hear. Christ speaks by the mouth of the preacher; you must hear, act, and fear. To-day we have to treat of the principal thing, namely, how we are to go away after the sermon: "Go and do;" or

I. We must so take to heart what we have heard, that we will act on it.

II. If we do not do so, we have reason to fear.

I. It is after the sermon that the real good of it is seen; it is then that the first fruits must be reaped. There is a great difference between a sermon and the Mass. If you hear Mass on

Sundays and holydays with inward attention and outward reverence, do your part, and, as far as this commandment is concerned, you are not bound to do any more. On the contrary, if you come to a sermon and hear it as you ought, even if you think often of it afterwards, that is not near enough; that is only the smallest and least profitable part of your duty. What still remains for you to do is the most important of all, and everything depends on it, and that is the real observance, the practical fulfilment of the truths you have heard. The Apostle says: "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." And that should be the only end and object of your coming to sermons; this is the only fruit that we must derive from them, namely, so to take to heart what we have heard that we are not satisfied with merely speculating upon it, but really act according to it. "Go and do."

A pious woman was once hurrying home after a sermon when she met a gentleman, hurrying to church in the hope of hearing a part of the sermon, who asked her if it was over yet. No, said the woman, it is not over yet. And how is it, then, asked the gentleman, that the people are coming out of the church in crowds, and do not remain to the end? Because, said she, the preacher has finished his exhortation and has left the pulpit. This answer surprised the gentleman. Are you in your senses, he asked, or do you take me for a fool? I have asked you if the sermon is over, and you said no; and now you tell me that the preacher has left the pulpit. What is the meaning of that? It is all true, answered the pious woman; I maintain what I said. You must know, sir, that it is one thing for the preacher to have ended his discourse, and another for the sermon to be quite finished. The first concerns the preacher alone, the second concerns both him and his audience, and is certainly not finished for either of them, because what he said to the people from the pulpit has still to be performed by them. So that the sermon is not yet over, nor will it be until the people

who have heard it realize its teaching in their lives and actions. There is still a great deal to be done before the sermon comes to an end.

Here we come upon the place where the fault of the greater number lies hidden. The Jews and Pharisees heard the doctrine and preaching of Christ with great attention. "They wondered" (John 7 : 15), "but they did not amend their lives." Is not this complaint true of many who, when going home after the sermon, can only say, with astonishment: What a fine sermon that was! And that is all the good it has done them! Poor preacher! did all your efforts tend to nothing else but to hear the empty praise: you have preached well? Oh, if that is the case, I pity you; you had better have remained at home in your room and said the Rosary. Is it only for this that you have worked all the week—to hear a few empty words of praise? A fine reward for your labor, indeed! Unfortunate hearer! have you derived no other profit from the sermon than to be able to say a few words in praise of it? If so, I am sorry that you listened with such patience and attention; it was not worth your while to come away from your house.

How many are there not, also, amongst those Christians who hear sermons, of whom it might be said, with truth: "They admire, but do not amend their lives?" Sermons are preached so often, and what is the result of it all? People come and listen with wonder and pleasure, with desire and longing, but there is not the least improvement in their lives. Sermons are preached against pride, avarice, injustice, immorality, dangerous companions and meetings, envy, vindictiveness, and enmity; against the common habit of swearing and cursing, against backbiting, calumny, rash judgments, impure conversations, drunkenness, vanity in dress, sloth in the divine service, and so forth. But have people become more humble or modest? Have they restored the ill-gotten goods, or the injured character of their neighbor? Do they avoid bad com-

pany? Are they more chaste and restrained in their thoughts, desires, language, dress, manner, and actions? Have Christian charity, union, and friendship been established amongst enemies? Is there no cursing or swearing to be heard any more? Is drunkenness at an end? Is there an increase of zeal in the divine service? Would to God that it were so! "They wondered," they have heard and understood well enough; "but they did not amend their ways," they are not a bit better for it.

Have you ever remarked what occurs in a large establishment, in which there are many different people together? All these people have different occupations, according to their different positions: some sit at the fire and warm themselves, others stand and talk together, others drink and play, or merely look on; one of the servants is cleaning the room, another is in the kitchen cooking, a third is spinning or sewing; there is a waiter laying the table, here is some one engaged at his trade; the master of the house is writing or studying, the mistress is occupied with the children, and all the others have their own occupation. Now, suppose that a band of musicians comes before the door and begins to play; at once everybody in the house leaves his or her business; some run to the door, others to the windows and listen with all their ears. How beautiful that is, they say to each other. When the music is over they return to their former occupations: one to the fire, another to the interrupted conversation, the third to his trade, the fourth to the kitchen. A striking example of what happens to many who hear sermons is the complaint that God makes: "Thou art to them as a musical song. . . . they hear thy words and do them not" (Ezech. 33 : 32). The many different occupations of those people mentioned above represent the different vices of the inhabitants of each town and community. One is inclined to one thing, another to another. When the bell rings for the sermon, they all leave their vices for a time; they go to church and hear the Word of God with attention, eagerness and pleas-

ure. They say: That was a good sermon; I could have listened still longer to it. But what is the fruit of it? They all return to their former occupations; they go back to the same vices, the same company, the same habits, the same foul sins, as before. They do not according to what they have heard.

Even many of those who are frightened by the terrible truths they hear from the pulpit do not amend their conduct in the least when the sermon is over. They seem to me like the blind man of Bethsaida, to whom Christ restored sight. Our Lord asked him if he could see anything. He answered: "I see men, as it were trees, walking" (Mark 8 : 24). What do you mean? It seems that you are still blind; trees do not walk; how can men walk like trees? Yet he saw right enough. After being cured by Christ he saw that men are like trees in this world. You may have remarked that when a strong wind blows the trees shake, the branches and leaves begin to tremble as if the whole tree were about to be torn up by the roots. But the roots hold firm: it is only the branches and leaves that are stirred; the trunk remains firmly attached to the ground, or, if it is sometimes blown down, the wind must be very strong indeed. Do we not see the same thing nowadays amongst Christians? The storm of truth assails their consciences when they listen to a sermon, and moves them, by representing the eternal truths of our faith, the shortness and uncertainty of life, the bitterness of death, the rigor of divine justice, the pains of hell, the joys of heaven. Many are moved, frightened, and made uneasy by these truths; they sigh and tremble like leaves on the trees, and often condemn their own wickedness. But are the roots of their sins torn up? How many of them make good confessions? How many do penance? When and where is the real amendment of their lives to be found? It is only the head that moves with them, not the heart. As soon as the wind is over, when they have forgotten their fear and anxiety, they settle down in the same vices as before; they have

strong roots that still fasten them to the earth; that is to say, their sins, of which they do not repent. It should not be so; we must indeed be moved like the trees, but we must not remain stationary like them. We should pull up our sins by the roots, and do and fulfil what we have heard in the sermon. "Christ speaks, we must act." If we do not, there is only one alternative, and that to our great loss: "we have reason to fear."

II. What have we to fear? That the sermons we hear will cause the lessening or the total deprivation of divine grace in this life, and will subject us to a more rigorous judgment and a deeper damnation in eternity. There is no doubt that sermons, preached frequently and zealously, are a great sign of the divine liberality and mercy to a congregation; but do you not think that they are also a means of satisfying the justice and anger of God? That, as they give food and nourishment to some souls, they are poisonous to others; an enlightenment for some, a deprivation of light to others, and that, while they help some to save their souls, they occasion the loss of others? The Word of God is certainly a great blessing for many, who live according to it and are guided by it, and who would be lost eternally without it; but it is also a great curse to others, who, although they hear and believe it, yet do not amend their lives, but remain in their sins. The same rain that ripens the corn for the barn causes the thorns to grow in order to be cast into the fire. In the same way the heavenly rain of the Word of God, when it pours itself upon souls that are well disposed to receive it, makes them grow in virtue and disposes them for heaven; but when it falls upon souls that are filled with the thorns of sinful inclinations, wilfully indulged in, without any effort to uproot them, it only hastens on their ruin and destruction.

1. After such long continued ingratitude and obstinacy on the part of the sinner, and such fatherly mercy on the part of God, that punishment is not too severe, that anger and indig-

nation not without just cause! A father who has a bad son, after trying by every means possible to bring him to a sense of duty, when he sees that his efforts are fruitless, is at last compelled, for the sake of his family, to disinherit that son and not to look upon him any more as his child. But how does he do that? In order to free himself from all blame, and to give his son no just cause of complaint, he sends a friend to the latter to explain how disobedient he was, and to tell him of the punishment that is impending over him, although there is no hope that this warning will do any good. Now, who is to be blamed for this disinheriting of the bad son? Is the father to be accused of acting an unfatherly part and of being too severe on his son, or is the son to be blamed because, after repeated warnings, he still perseveres in his wickedness? There is no doubt that the latter has all the fault, and it is only right that he should be disinherited. What, then, are we to think, on the one hand, of God, who calls incessantly, in sermons, on the sinner to repent, and on the other hand of the sinner who hears the call, but does not obey it? What are we to think when we hear that God, after so often warning the wicked Pharao, said to Moses: "Go in to Pharao;" I know well that he will not hear nor obey thee, because he is hardened. Nevertheless, go to him and speak to him. What, I ask, am I to conclude from this, except that God is a merciful, patient, and long-suffering Father; and that we are his wilful and disobedient children, who abuse his patience so long that the warnings and sermons he so often causes us to hear become the terrible instruments of his anger when he deprives us of our inheritance, because we refused to listen to him.

If we do not do as we are told in sermons, we have reason to fear. What else? The stricter account we shall have to render in judgment. For there is no doubt that more will be expected from him who has received more: The judgment of one who has no excuse to offer will be sharper and more rigorous;

and he is less to be excused who was offered graces more frequently, which he neglected to profit by. How will you fare then, sinful Christian? You have shown no sign of improvement after having heard the Word of God so often; how will you fare when an account is demanded of your vices and sins, and of the good that you omitted to do? Alas! even if the great book were not opened against you to convince you of your wickedness; if both Angels and devils kept away from you, and did not appear against you; if the just Judge himself remained silent and refrained from condemning you, there would still remain another judge to put you to confusion. Hear what Christ says: "And if any man hear my words and keep them not, I do not judge him." "He that receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him." "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12 : 47, 48).

2. And besides that, it will make the pains of hell greater for you for all eternity. For that servant who knew the will of his Lord,....and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. Ah, my Lord and my God! Do I and so many others ascend the pulpit only to bring down eternal ruin on those souls whom thou wishest to save by our preaching? Must we be a stumbling-block to thy people, to make their fall more dangerous? Must I and others, whose only wish is to bring all those people with us into heaven, appear against them as witnesses on the day of thy justice? Must the truths they have heard from our lips be the voice of one crying out, not in the desert, but in hell, to those unfortunate souls: You knew it, you could and ought to have done it, but you did not wish to do it! What a disappointment for our zeal! What a mistaken charity was ours! We always had the intention and the hope of helping you to save your souls, and behold! whether we like it or not, we help you to a deeper damnation! Instead of the good thoughts and works that we may have left in many pious souls, many more become more culpable and less deserv-

ing of pardon because we have preached to them! Would it not be better for us to remain silent? Should we not renounce preaching? But, if we did, God would be against us, and we should have to utter that eternal woe against ourselves: "Woe is me, because I have held my peace" (Isai. 6 : 5), and have not done my duty! Must we then continue to preach? But, oh, terrible thought! by doing so we shall make the sins of some more grievous; from one sermon to another, they will be more inexcusable, and will make their judgment more severe, their hell more intolerable! Must the people then remain away from sermons? Alas, they will be then still more culpable, and they will one day hear the words: "I called and you refused" (Prov. 1 : 24); I have prepared my light and grace for you, and you did not wish to accept them!

Ah, Christians! if you wished, you could solve this difficulty, and free us from this anxiety and yourselves from this fear. "Christ is speaking to us, let us act." Let us do the work that, as we have heard in sermons, we ought to do, and then there will be no cause for fear on either side. Go and do, and you will save your souls.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE DUTIES OF THE LAITY TOWARD PRIESTS.

"*Go, show yourselves to the priests.*"—Luke 17 : 14.

In almost every part of the Gospel in which we read of the miraculous cures of leprosy effected by Jesus Christ, we read also that he sent those whom he healed to the priests. Thus, in the 8th chapter of St. Matthew, when the leper said to him: "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean," and Jesus an-

swered: "I will; be thou made clean;" he told him to tell no one, but commanded him, at the same time, to go to the priest: "Go, show thyself to the priest" (Matt. 8 : 4). And why was that? To show that he wished to honor priests. It is of this that I will speak to-day, for it is a matter in which many Christians err grievously.

The priests of Jesus Christ, no matter what sort they are, must be held in the highest honor by all.

I. "Honor to whom honor is due" (Rom. 13 : 7), says St. Paul. But honor is due to a person for different reasons, either

1. On account of the high position and dignity that God has given him above others, and thus a king or prince is deserving of far greater honor than what is due to an ordinary citizen, although the latter may be a very rich man; or,

2. On account of the excellence of the office he fills, and thus the judge must be honored above a lawyer or clerk; or,

3. On account of the person whom he represents; thus the ambassadors and plenipotentiaries of a king have a right to the same honor that would be shown to their royal master.

1. Priests are entitled to honor for all three reasons. Let us hear what the Holy Scripture says of the dignity of priests: it calls them the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the trumpets of the Lord, the walls and pillars of the Church, the gate of heaven, the privy councillors and courtiers of God, kings, Angels of the Lord, gods on earth. The Prophet Joel says: "Between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep" (Joel 2 : 17). Therefore in processions they always walk next to the Blessed Sacrament, just as courtiers are accustomed to do with their sovereigns, while the people walk behind them, as lackeys do with their king. "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood" (1 Pet. 2 : 9). The holy Fathers maintain that the priesthood far excels the

dignity of royalty. St. Ambrose says: "If you compare the priestly dignity with that of a king, you will find that the former exceeds the latter more than gold does lead." "For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth, because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts" (Malach. 2 : 7). What more proof do we require? It should suffice for us to know that when the Eternal Father wished to make known the glory of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, he gave him this title and confirmed it with an oath: "The Lord hath sworn and he will not repent; thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. 109 : 4). Such was the oath sworn by the great God. Could there be anything greater said or imagined of the dignity of the priesthood?

Do you think that I have said too much and made too much of the priesthood? If you do, then consider the other source of dignity: see what an office and duty the priest has to perform. You will then see clearly enough that what I have said up to this of the dignity of the priesthood is really true. In what does the priestly office consist? In teaching men and showing them the right way to heaven, in acting as mediators between God and man, and in something far more excellent still, which is the twofold power that is given to every priest in his ordination, and which imprints an indelible character on his soul, the power that he has over the Body and Blood of Christ.

2. Priests alone have power over the souls of Christians in the sacramental tribunal of Penance, in which they, as judges with full powers, pronounce judgments with regard to the souls even of emperors, kings, and rulers, and declare them to be either true children of God and in his grace and friendship, or slaves of the devil, groaning under the yoke of sin, and thus decide whether they belong to heaven, or to hell; for to priests alone do Christ and his representatives say: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are for-

given them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John 20 : 22, 23). Oh, the mighty princes of heaven, Angels and Archangels, here must yield to poor mortals. They cannot say to a sinner and enemy of God: "I absolve you from your sins;" I forgive the evil you have done, I restore to you the sanctifying grace that you have lost, and make you again the friend of God; I free you from the flames of hell, and make you an heir to heaven; that is beyond their power. "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" was the question that the Pharisees in astonishment asked our Lord when they heard him say to the man sick of the palsy: "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." How? they asked in surprise, "who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Luke 5 : 20, 21.) Certainly I can do it, although I am only a sinful man, and so can every priest.

But the priest has a still greater power, not merely over the souls of men, but over the Almighty God himself, in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, for as often as he pleases he can offer the Son of God to his heavenly Father, and with a few words he can change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. Where is the angel in heaven, or the other man on earth to whom God has given such power? The world still wonders at the Prophet Elias, who could make fire come down from heaven in obedience to his command; at Josue, who commanded the sun to stand still, and was obeyed; at different Saints at whose command mountains changed their position. But what are all these miracles compared to what the priest does at the altar daily? He need say only the four little words: "This is my body," and behold! the great God of heaven and earth is obedient to his voice. Jesus Christ comes down upon earth with his divinity and humanity, body and soul, and is present wherever and whenever the priest wishes. St. Ambrose compares the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ to the creation of the world; for, just as before the creation there was neither heaven nor earth,

nor any creature, and all things were called into existence by the word of the Almighty God: "let it be;" "he spoke and they were made" (Ps. 148 : 5), in the same way, before the consecration there is nothing in the Host but the substance of bread, and when the priest says the words, "This is my body," the bread is annihilated and the Body of Christ takes its place. Yet there is this difference between the divine "let it be" and the words of the priest, that the former created all things, while the latter bring forth, so to speak, him of whom St. John says: "All things were made by him."

3. Finally, who is the Person whom the priest represents? It is again the highest Person in heaven and on earth, Jesus Christ the Son of God. Hear what St. Paul says: "For Christ we are ambassadors; God, as it were, exhorting by us" (2 Cor. 5 : 20). Christ himself says to priests: "As the Father sent me, so I also send you" (John 20 : 21), in my stead: "he that heareth you heareth me; he that despiseth you despiseth me." What the priest does outwardly, Christ does inwardly, and all is done in the Person of Christ. The priest says in the confessional: "I absolve thee from thy sins;" he says at the altar, during holy Mass: "This is my body, this is the chalice of my blood;" nor can he say those words otherwise than as a plenipotentiary and ambassador of Jesus Christ, just as if Jesus Christ himself spoke them, for if he spoke them in his own person they would evidently be false and untrue, since it is quite clear that the body and blood of the priest are not hidden under the appearances of bread and wine. You may see from this that no dignity can exceed that of the priest, that no power can be more excellent, that no person can be greater than he whom the priest represents.

II. 1. By divine command priests were forbidden even to uncover their heads in the presence of the people. Priests were allowed to marry into the royal family. The highest court of

justice, from which no appeal was allowed, was that of the priesthood alone, according to the divine command: "But he that will be proud and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, who ministereth at the time to the Lord thy God,.... that man shall die" (Deut. 17 : 12).

The very name and presence of the priest inspired all with reverence and respect. When Anna, the mother of the Prophet Samuel, was praying with bitter tears in the temple at Jerusalem, that God might take away her barrenness, the high-priest Heli came in, and, thinking she was intoxicated, he said to her the reproachful words: "How long wilt thou be drunk? digest a little of the wine of which thou hast taken too much" (1 Kings 1 : 14). Certainly, that was a great calumny; it was a shameful crime of which to accuse a good, innocent, and respectable woman, who had already sorrow enough to bear, and had sufficient reason therefore to be very angry. In our days we should not expect any woman to bear patiently such a grievous insult, without making any effort to defend her good name and to prove her innocence. She would soon find words enough to defend herself. But how did Anna act in those circumstances? She thought to herself: It is a priest who is speaking to me; and therefore she answered in a humble manner, with downcast eyes and the greatest reverence: "Not so, my lord, for I am an exceeding unhappy woman, and have drunk neither wine, nor any strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thy handmaid for one of the daughters of Belial" (1 Kings 1 : 15, 16). Mark how she calls him her lord, and herself his handmaid: "Would to God thy handmaid may find grace in thy eyes" (Ibid. 18). So great was the respect she had for one who unjustly accused her, because he was a priest of God! St. Paul, although he knew that the Jewish priesthood had ceased, and had become a mere empty name, had still a great respect for it; for when he was beaten on the mouth by the order of Ananias the priest, he said,

full of zeal for the glory of God: "God shall strike thee, thou whited wall. For sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and contrary to the law commandest me to be struck?" What? asked the bystanders: "Dost thou revile the high-priest of God?" (Acts. 23 : 3, 4.) Whereupon St. Paul was shocked, and excused himself humbly, saying: "I knew not, brethren, that he is the high-priest. For it is written: Thou shalt not speak evil of the prince of thy people" (Acts 23 : 5).

2. Even Christ himself was always very respectful to the Jewish priests, although he knew their hypocrisy and impiety. We read that he made a scourge and with it drove out of the temple those who were profaning it. And who were they? "Buyers and sellers." Why not rather the priests, who were really to blame for the desecration of the temple, and who tried to make profit for themselves out of it? No; he left them alone because they were priests, so as to show the people the respect he had for the bare name of priest. Once only did the meek Saviour complain as he stood before his judge, and that was when he received a blow on the cheek. He asked the servant of the high-priest: If I have spoken well, "why dost thou strike me?" (John 18 : 23.) Strange, indeed, that Jesus, who bore so many injuries and insults, and even the terrible scourging, the crown of thorns, and the nails, without opening his mouth, should complain of being unjustly struck on the cheek! Why was that? Not merely because that blow was struck unjustly, for his scourging, crowning with thorns, and crucifixion were still more unjust; but because he was struck on the pretext of his having been disrespectful to the high-priest, for the servant who gave him the blow said: "Answerest thou the high-priest so?" That deserves a blow! Jesus could not bear to be accused of irreverence toward the priest, and therefore, lest any one should be scandalized in that respect, or take occasion from that false accusation of being irreverent toward priests, he said: "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but

if well, why strikest thou me?" as if I had been guilty of saying anything disrespectful?

From that you must again conclude that if the priests of the Old Law were by divine command held in the highest esteem by all the people, if the Apostles and Jesus Christ himself showed such respect toward them, although they only foreshadowed the priesthood of the New Law, and even when their priesthood had altogether ceased, what honor, then, must we not show to the true and holy priesthood of Jesus Christ, and to his prests in the New Law, who are invested with such a great dignity, and who represent the Person of Jesus Christ.

3. It is that thought that makes good and pious Christians humble themselves in the presence even of poor and lowly priests. St. Anthony the Great, whenever he met a priest, used to throw himself down on his knees, kiss the priest's hand respectfully and remain there until he got his blessing. St. Catherine of Siena thought herself unworthy of kissing the priest's hand, but she used to kiss the ground on which he walked.

Why wonder any longer that even crowned heads bowed down humbly before priests. The Emperor Constantine took the lowest place at the Council of Nice, below all priests and on a low stool; he also decreed that priests should be honored above all lay people, no matter what the rank, dignity, or position of the latter might be. Boleslaus, King of Poland, never sat down in presence of a priest. In the same way the Emperor Theodosius refused to sit down when in the choir with the priests, although the patriarch tried to compel him to do so, because he thought that by so doing he would be wanting in respect to the priesthood of Christ. The Emperor Basil spoke publicly to the people on the dignity of the priesthood, saying: An earthly lord, no matter how clever, learned, rich, or noble he is, is still only a sheep of the fold of Christ; on the other hand, a priest, no matter how poor, lowly, and simple

he is, is a shepherd of the fold of Christ, and therefore must be honored above all those who are not priests.

4. You will think that I say all this because I, as a priest, would willingly be held in great honor. And you are quite right; it is true that I desire the honor that belongs to the priesthood; but not for the person of the priest so much as for the Person of Jesus Christ, whom he represents, and who wishes his ministers and ambassadors to be honored; just as the honor we show the crucifix is not given to the wood or stone of which it is made, but to him whom it represents. For I readily acknowledge that the priest is only a weak, miserable, and unworthy mortal like all others, and although he represents the Person of Christ, although he is invested with great power and dignity, such as are not given to the Angels, yet he has not laid aside his human nature, which is inclined to evil. I know that priests are often very sinful men and full of faults, and I must say with St. Paul, I am the chief of them (1 Tim. 1 : 15). I must acknowledge, with heartfelt regret, that now and then there are priests in the world who far surpass all others in wickedness; for they lead bad, immoral, and scandalous lives, unworthy of their dignity, and if such do not repent betimes, they will be amongst those of whom one of the holy Fathers says: "The crowns of priests will be the pavement of hell;" for since they are during their lives raised to the highest dignity on earth, but disgrace it by their sinful ways, they will be sent after death to the deepest pit of hell, in punishment of their crimes.

5. Not without cause did Christ say to all: "According to their works do ye not" (Matt. 23 : 3). For it is a grievous error of some to imagine that they can do everything that a priest does or approves of. No; not everything that good and seemingly pious, religious and secular priests approve of is to be taken as an infallible rule of conduct; because even holy people have their faults and failings. Hence St. Paul says

these remarkable words: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11 : 1); by which he meant, if you see that I imitate Christ, then you can and you must do as I do. But no matter how wicked, faulty, or despicable a priest may be, he is still a priest of Jesus Christ; the Holiest of the holy, whom he represents, is still worthy of honor, so that he is to be honored just as if he were good and pious. I cannot show less respect to the ambassador of a king because he is not very clever or skilful, than if he were a miracle of knowledge, since I must honor the person of his master in him; nor must I hold a crucifix of wood in less esteem than a gold or silver one, for it represents Jesus Christ, whom I am always bound to honor.

St. Francis of Assisi understood that very well; he once entered a church the priest of which was leading a very bad life; a heretic came to him and said: What shameless priests you have in your religion; how could any one believe what is said by a man who leads such a bad life? St. Francis, in order to confound the heretic, and to show the people that they must honor even wicked priests, went up to the priest of the church, knelt before him and said: That this hand is soiled with many crimes, as that man says, I know not; but I do know that, in any case, it can dispense the Sacraments and many benefits of God to the people; therefore I kiss it with the respect and reverence that I owe to him in whose Name and by whose authority it dispenses the Sacraments. Thus speaking, he respectfully kissed the priest's hand, and by his humility induced him to amend his life.

Oh, how the example of this holy man puts to shame, not merely heretics, but many Catholics of our days! For how many there are who are grievously neglectful of their duty in this respect! Where is the honor due to Jesus Christ that you should pay to his representatives? I speak to you who do not hesitate to call priests by opprobrious names, and to ridicule everything they say; is that the way to honor Jesus Christ in

his priests? I speak to you who have the habit of looking down on priests, who are ashamed to be seen with them because the most of them are of lowly birth; you have just as much reason to be ashamed of crucifixes because they are mostly made of paper or wood! Is that the way to honor Jesus Christ in his ambassadors? I speak to you who often expect priests to perform services for you that are only fit for menials to render; is that the way to honor Jesus Christ in his representatives? I speak to you who publicly laugh at and ridicule priests; and to you, especially, who take a delight in speaking ill of them and in making known their faults. What a terrible crime it is to take away a priest's character, and thus to injure the reputation of a whole parish and give the people the greatest scandal; if we are ever bound to conceal our neighbor's faults, we must certainly cover those of a priest as well as we can. The great Emperor Constantine received letters in the Council of Nice complaining of some priests, but he threw them unopened into the fire, saying: It is not right to make known the faults of priests. A favorite saying of his, too, was: If I saw a priest doing wrong, I would cover him with my imperial mantle, so as to hide his sin as far as possible. Jesus Christ himself, when the adulteress was accused before him by the priests in the temple, wrote their sins on the ground that they might be ashamed to stone the woman to death; and why, we might ask, did he write them on the ground? He did so because they were the sins of priests, and our Lord wished to conceal them on that account, and therefore he wrote them so that the words would be at once rubbed out.

I conclude with the words of the Sacred Scripture: "With all thy soul fear the Lord, and reverence his priests" (Eccles. 7 : 31). Whenever you meet a priest, or speak of one, or hear one speak, think of Jesus Christ, whose ambassador he is. Think, also, of him whom you dishonor if you are in any way disrespectful to a priest. A king takes to himself the insult

offered to his ambassador, and will not allow it to go unpunished; and Jesus Christ also will punish all who offer insults to his priests, for he says: "He that despiseth you, despiseth me." "I will be the revenger" (Deut. 18 : 19). I repeat: "With all thy soul fear the Lord, and reverence his priests." Remember what our Lord has promised to those who honor his ambassadors and representatives: He who honors me, I will glorify him (1 Kings 2 : 30) in eternity. Amen.

Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost.

THE DUTIES OF SERVANTS TOWARD THEIR MASTERS AND MISTRESSES.

"*No man can serve two masters.*"—Matt. 6 : 24.

It is impossible to serve two masters at the same time. It is easy enough to serve one master. And would to God that all did so, as they ought. If I were to inquire about the matter, many masters and mistresses would complain that they have a great deal of trouble and annoyance with their servants. The cause of that is sometimes to be found in the faults of masters and mistresses themselves, who do not know how to manage their households properly, and sometimes in the servants, who will not do their duty. I will to-day explain to servants the duty they owe their employers, and how they are to perform it so as to please God and satisfy their own consciences.

I. They must serve their masters and mistresses with fidelity.

II. They must serve them with ready and patient obedience.

I. There can be no doubt that servants must serve their mas-

ters and mistresses. The very name of servant proves that; it is the will and law of God; it is required by the contract they made when they entered into service. But there is a great difference between serving and serving. There are some to whom Christ says with love and favor: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25 : 23). What a beautiful commendation that is! There are others whom the same Lord will drive away with anger and displeasure, saying to them: "Wicked and slothful servant" (Ibid. 26). What a terrible condemnation! He who wishes to belong to the first class must serve his master with honesty and fidelity; he must be exact in performing the work and the duty entrusted to him, just as if he were doing it for his own benefit and advantage; he must be faithful in guarding, and, if possible, in increasing his master's goods; he must be faithful in protecting his master's household, as well as he can, from all hurt and harm. Two commands are given to all men by God: "Decline from evil, and do good" (Ps. 36 : 27). I can sin grievously against either, and so lose my soul. It is not sufficient for the service of God for me to abstain from evil; I must also do the good that is required of me. The same thing is to be observed, in due proportion, by all servants toward their masters and mistresses. To rob your masters, and carry off, or wilfully destroy their property, is, as all admit, very wrong and unjust, and you would be bound to bring back or make restitution for the stolen or injured property, if you could do so, before getting pardon for your sin. But supposing one does none of these things, is he, therefore, a good and faithful servant? By no means; otherwise, the servant in the Gospel would have been unjustly treated. He was intrusted by his master with a talent, which he did not appropriate to himself, but hid carefully in the ground, and gave back again to his master when the latter returned; and yet because he did not use it for his master's profit he was treated as a wicked and unfaithful servant, and

was cast into exterior darkness. But, he could have said, I have done no wrong to my master; I have not injured his property, and I have given him back what belonged to him. No matter; you are a bad servant, because you should at least have laid out the talent at interest, that your master might have received it back with profit.

In the same way those servants sin against this duty who are lazy and careless in doing their work, and who are indifferent as to how they perform it; or who, when they see any act of unfaithfulness in their fellow-servants, do not make it known to their masters, or otherwise do not protect the household from injury when it is in their power to do so. As a general rule, that negligence and laziness may be traced to the fact that they consider their masters as strangers. What is it to me? they say; I gain nothing by that profit, and suffer nothing by that loss. That is true, if you consider your master alone; his goods do not belong to you; but your master is not a stranger to you in the sight of God, who has called you to your state of life that you may look after your master's interests as carefully and diligently as you can, according to the duty imposed upon you, and a strict account will one day be required of you, when God will say to you: "Give an account of thy stewardship" (Luke 16 : 2).

Still greater is the sin committed by those servants who secretly make away with their master's property, or give it to their friends and relations under the pretext that their masters are rich enough and will not miss what they give away, or that what is of little use to them will be of great service to those to whom they give it; and by those who now and then keep something small for themselves, or use it for their own purposes. Ah, my dear people, that will not do; such acts are unjust, and are worse than the thefts committed by robbers. How so? Because one can protect himself against a robber with bars and bolts, but not against those whom he does not

even suspect, because they are his domestics and he trusts in them. You say, my master has enough already; what I take from him will do him no harm. Has he enough? Has he therefore asked that something be taken away from him? Is it therefore allowed for you to make away with his property without his consent? If that were the case all poor people could, with clear consciences, rob the rich, and excuse themselves by saying: Oh, they are rich enough; they will not miss it. No, that will not do. But, you say, suppose it is something trifling that I now and then keep for myself, or steal; I will make up for it by being more diligent in my work. If your master has made that agreement with you, that, provided you are diligent in your work, you can now and then take some trifle for yourself, then it is all right; you can do so. Ask him, however, if he wishes to make such an agreement, and if he says no, then your excuse is of no avail; your master does not require extraordinary diligence from you on such terms. Do your daily work well, look after your own concerns, and let your master manage his. Again, if it is a trifle that you take away, it is certainly only a trifling act of unfaithfulness, a small theft, a venial sin. But when it occurs often it becomes greater, and when small thefts are added together they make up matter enough for a grievous sin; and when you cause your master serious injury you commit a mortal sin of theft, and you incur the obligation of restitution. More than that: if you intend to take away little things now and then, and to keep them until you have something considerable, you commit a mortal sin, not merely when you commit the last of the series of thefts, but also in every single theft. The reason thereof is that you have each time the will and intention to commit a grievous theft, and of course each time you renew your intention of committing a grievous sin.

Moreover, sin is committed also by those servants who privately supplement their wages, either because they think they

are paid too little for the work they do, or because other servants are better paid for doing less work; or because they have helped their employers in some way that did not enter into their engagement; or because a part of their wages has been kept back in punishment of a fault. For these and similar reasons they try to pay themselves secretly, and as they think, without doing any wrong. Again, my dear people, I must tell you that that will not do. No one is a judge is his own cause. If every one could pronounce according to his own opinion, with regard to himself, what disturbance that would cause in the world! Who could then trust his neighbor?

1. For, in the first place, you think your wages too small in comparison with the work you do, or that others are better paid; why, then, did you agree with your master for such wages? You could have demanded different wages if you liked; and if you did not think that the work would turn out to be as hard as it really is, you must represent the matter to your employer and ask for more wages.

2. In the second place, if you have done something for him, that you were not bound to do, decency requires him to repay you in some way for that service, but if he refuses to do so he is only acting as he has a right to act, because you rendered the service of your own accord, at his desire.

3. In the third place, if something is taken away from your wages, I know that it is a sin crying to heaven to do so without just cause, and if you are innocent you can complain to your master; if you are guilty, you must bear the consequences of your own act.

Those servants sin against the fidelity due to their employers who, without their knowledge and consent, give alms out of their property to the poor. But, you say, that is a work of Christian charity and mercy that is shown to Jesus Christ himself, whom the poor person represents. Can I not even venture to give a piece of bread to my poor and needy Saviour?

Certainly, it is a work of mercy, but it is not a good work unless you give the alms from what belongs to yourself, or from what you are allowed to give away that belongs to others. I repeat, without the knowledge and consent of your employers; for if your master and mistress are in the habit of giving alms, you can, in their absence, reasonably presume that you have their permission to give also; or if they know that you give away the remnants of the food, and they say nothing to you about it. they give a tacit consent to what you do. In other cases, when the master and mistress are displeased with you for speaking to them on behalf of the poor, although they sometimes sin through want of charity, still you are not allowed to give alms even to Christ of what belongs to others.

II. Two things are to be observed—namely, a ready obedience and a patient obedience. A ready obedience in all things that masters and mistresses justly command, just as if the command came from God himself. Hear what St. Paul says on this point, when he explains the duties of different states of life: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ," and not otherwise; not because they are looking at you, not because you wish to please men, "but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephes. 6 : 5-7), certain that you will receive your reward from the same Lord. In these words the Apostle explains the dignity of your state and duty. Servitude is generally looked upon by men as undesirable, contemptible, and despicable, and they who serve others think that their state is the lowest and most unfortunate of all. But St. Paul says, for your consolation, that such is not the case; you are servants of Christ, attendants on the Most High God; and whenever you obey your masters on earth, with ready submission and a

good intention, God accepts your obedience as if it were offered to him, and in addition to the wages you receive on earth he will give you the eternal joys of heaven.

What a happiness for servants to be thus always certain of doing the will of God whenever they obey the lawful commands of their employers during the day! It is in doing that holy will that all our piety, devotion, and holiness consist. Your masters can sin by their commands or prohibitions, but you cannot go astray by obeying them as long as what is commanded is not against the law of God. Such is the will of God, and you always do a holy work, that is pleasing to him and meritorious of eternal glory, as long as you do not forget the good intention, nor lose the state of grace by a mortal sin. Therefore, obey your employers gladly and joyfully, with readiness, and, in the simplicity of your hearts, "as to Christ."

Now, there are two sorts of servants who sin against this obedience. Some are not obedient enough, others are too obedient.

1. The first class consists of those who must be told a thing three or four times before they do it, and who thus generally cause their employers much annoyance and anger, and give occasion for impatience, and cursing or abuse; or who do what they are told, when it is against their will, with a great deal of grumbling and discontent, slowly and unwillingly; or, what is very disrespectful indeed, who answer their employers back and give them abuse for abuse, and curse for curse. If you would only remember for a moment that it is Jesus Christ whom you thus treat disrespectfully in the persons of your employers! Listen to what St. Paul says: "Whosoever are servants under the yoke, let them count their masters worthy of all honor; lest the name of the Lord and his doctrine be blasphemed" (1 Tim. 6 : 1). They must humbly obey, even as St. Peter says, the froward, wicked and ungodly, even those who command harshly and angrily. If one obeys only commands that are

given in kind and gentle words, or when the command is to his liking; if the master and mistress, in order to keep peace in the house, must give in to the humor of a servant, and not venture to ask him to do what he does not like to do, such an obedience as that is not worth much; in that way one does his own will, and not that of his master. In a word, there are servants who obey, but only in things that are easy, agreeable, and suited to their taste; in other matters they follow their own inclinations. Such servants as that are not worth much. No, they should obey in all things, exactly as their masters and mistresses wish, even if they have to act against their own will, their own comfort or convenience; and even if their obedience entails upon them difficulty, mortification, and humiliation; this is the proper kind of obedience, in which Christian virtue consists, and which increases one's merits and rewards in heaven.

2. The other class is still worse, and consists of those who are too obedient, and who, through human respect, or to please their employers, do everything that they are told, even if it be unlawful and against the laws of God or of the Church. Thus, for instance, servants sometimes consent to engage in servile work on Sundays and holydays. They tell lies, when ordered to do so, so as to cheat others in business. They carry letters to and fro, and thus help to keep up a criminal intercourse, or do other things for the same unlawful purpose. They help their masters to take revenge on an enemy, or try to ruin that enemy's character by calumny and detraction. In a word, they obey in things that are contrary to the law of God, and against their own consciences. Certainly, their employers are guilty of sin, and of a twofold sin, when they command or advise them to do things that are unlawful, for they sin against the duty imposed on them by God, according to which they are bound to exhort their dependants to virtue, and to help them in every way possible to save their souls. Nevertheless, the

servants, too, are guilty of sin by obeying their wicked commands, or following their bad advice, through fear or human respect, and by thus preferring their temporal masters to God. The tyrants who persecuted the Christians so cruelly, and tried to rob them of their faith, are lost forever. But so, too, are those Christians who were terrified by them into denying Christ. Of what good will the favor of your masters be to you if you lose the grace and friendship of God? Will they be able to defend you on the day of judgment, and to save you from the flames of hell? Or will you be able to excuse yourselves by saying: My master or my mistress told me to do so? What! the Judge will say to you, am I not your Supreme Master? Were you not bound to prefer my command to that of your earthly masters? No, a true servant of Jesus Christ does not hesitate to think and say what St. Peter said to the high-priest, who forbade him to preach the name of Jesus Christ: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5 : 29). A faithful handmaid of Christ thinks and says with undaunted courage: I will obey in all things lawful, but I will not depart a hair's breadth from the law of God. She would rather sacrifice her wages, allow herself to be ill-treated and turned out of the house, nay, would give up her life rather than act against her conscience or disobey the law of God, her Supreme Lord and Master.

Finally, you must obey contentedly and patiently. There is no doubt that you have many difficulties and annoyances to put up with every day, especially when your employers are hard, fault-finding, captious, and suspicious. But you must think to yourselves: this is the state in which God wishes me to serve him; this is the cross by which he wishes to bring me to heaven. Other people have their crosses to bear; my master has his troubles and difficulties with the household; my mistress has her trials with her children, or elsewhere, of which I know nothing, and perhaps she has more to bear than I;

therefore I will carry my cross, and bear it patiently for God's sake. I shall always say in my heart: Lord, "thy will be done!" The trouble is slight and will soon be over; the reward that awaits me is exceeding great, and will last forever. Remember that the God whom you serve in the person of your employer is "a God of patience," but also "a God of consolation" (Rom. 15 : 5). Serve your employers faithfully, obey them patiently! Encourage yourselves to do this by the example of the great King of heaven and earth, Jesus Christ, who for our sake "took the form of a servant;" who says of himself: "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt. 20 : 28); who was not only obedient to his heavenly Father even unto death (Phillip 2 : 8), but was also subject to poor mortals, to a poor virgin and a poor carpenter: "He was subject to them" (Luke 2 : 51). That is all we read of Christ from his twelfth to his thirtieth year. If you do your duty well, and for the love of God, you are much better off than many rich lords and ladies, and on the day of judgment you will take precedence of the highest potentates of earth, for then no notice will be taken of earthly rank. You will not be asked whether you were master or servant, mistress or maid, but whether you lived a just and pious life, according to your state, and fulfilled your duty properly. You will be placed on the right hand of your Judge, and will hear the consoling words from the mouth of your heavenly Father: "Call the laborers and pay them their hire" (Matth. 20 : 8); and with what indescribable joy you will hear Christ say to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful," for a short time, to me and to thy temporal master, "I will place thee over many things;" come now, "enter into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25 : 21), a blessing that I wish you with all my heart. Amen.

Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost.

The Christian Training of Children.

"*He gave him to his mother.*"—Luke 7 : 15.

Why does Christ give the son to his mother? The young man would certainly have gone to his mother of his own accord, after having been raised from the dead. But our Lord wished to remind the mother that she must henceforth confess that she would never have recovered her son if Christ had not restored him to life by a miracle. Christian parents, do you frequently think why and to what end God has given you your children? You must train them up carefully. But how, and for what, must you train them? For the end of their creation, for which God has made them. That is the only object you must have in bringing up your children. This is a very important matter, on which the salvation of many souls depends, and I am forced to speak of it by the great neglect that many parents are guilty of in this respect. I say, therefore,

I. Christian parents, bring up your children most carefully for the end of their creation.

II. The eternal salvation of your children requires it.

I. Most parents train up their children as regards the body very carefully from their youth; they are not wanting in that. But to what do they train them? To eat, drink, stand, or walk becomingly; cats and dogs do as much as that for their young. To speak, read, write and dress properly; that is no more than heathens and infidels do for their children. To what tends the greatest care of parents for their sons and daughters when the latter are past the years of childhood? Some try merely to

teach them some respectable trade, so that they can earn their living. Others, thinking that their children are not obliged to work, train them up to speak foreign languages, or to the liberal arts and sciences, or instruct them in commerce, or send them to travel in foreign countries, that they may know something of the world and its customs, and thus be able to deal with people in different offices and employments. Or they try to settle their daughter well in life, or to procure an office or a rich marriage for their son; or, finally, their whole aim is to be able to leave their children well off after their own death. If they are successful in that, their whole duty is fulfilled, as they think, and they have nothing more to trouble about. It certainly is a care that cannot be found fault with; and would that all fathers and mothers attended to it properly, and gave their children a decent trade or profession. If they did, there would not be so many idlers and good-for-nothings going about the streets.

But, Christian parents, is that the only end for which your children were entrusted and given to you by their Creator? Have they come into the world for no other purpose than to care for their bodies, which will one day become the food of worms? Is it their only object to earn their bread, and to live respectably in the eyes of the world? Have they not a soul—one only soul—one immortal soul? Does not that concern you at all? Have their immortal souls nothing to hope for, nothing to fear after this life? There is an eternal fire, to which your children may be condemned; forget it not. There is an eternal heaven, in which they may rejoice; forget it not. To this latter place they are called by God. They are entrusted to you by their Creator that they may attain it. The principal thing, the only object for which they are created, is to live piously, to fear and love God, and to be eternally happy. If they do not attain that end it were better for them never to have been born. If you do not train them up for it, you are not the

fathers and mothers, but the butchers and murderers of your children, whose souls God will demand from you.

Christian parents, what a great and precious deposit God has left with you in your children! Look after them with the greatest care, so that no crafty thief may steal them away from you, but that you may be able to restore them to him from whom you have received them. When your children were brought home, after having received Baptism, you received their souls, and henceforth were bound to honor them; not as your children, but what they really were, as children of God, and to take them from the hands of the priest as a sacred treasure given to you by him in the name of God, who thereby wishes to say to you: You have offered this child, the fruit of my blessing, to me. I love it, and will henceforth be its only father and mother. Now I lend it, I deposit it with you, but with the strict obligation on your side to bring it up according to the spirit and law of my Gospel, and to restore it to me in the same state in which you now receive it. And what state is that? When you brought that child to me first it was still a child of Adam, a slave of the devil, laboring under a malediction. Now that I have washed it in my Blood, cleansed it from original sin, and adorned it with sanctifying grace, it is a holy child of God, a vessel of grace, a living temple of the Holy Ghost, a citizen of heaven, a companion of the Angels, an heir of my glory and happiness. Such is the state in which you must restore it to me, and woe to you if by your neglect in training it, it should be led astray from me and be lost! Therefore, Christian parents, all your desires must tend to preserve that heavenly treasure for your children; all your ambition must be centered therein, that you gain eternal honor for them; all your care and trouble must be employed to restore them uninjured to their heavenly Father.

But there is nothing that many parents think less of than the last end of their children; nothing they care less about than

bringing them up for God and heaven! If many a father and mother were commanded by God, under the severe punishment of eternal damnation, to bring up their sons and daughters to worldly vanities, they could not do more in that way than they do now. If the devil were to say to many a father and mother: You must give up your son, your daughter, to me, could they do more to satisfy his desire than they do now? If they were adressed in the words of Christ to St. Peter, when the latter was troubled about the fate of his fellow-apostle, St. John: "What is it to thee? Follow thou me." Never mind your children's souls; look after yourself, or be satisfied with providing them with food and drink. Look after their bodies, let their souls be. If, I say, many parents were thus spoken to by God, could they be more careless or neglectful in this matter than they already are? There are many who look after their horses and dogs with more care than after the immortal souls of their children. Miserable children! I pity your lot in being born of, and brought up by, such parents. It seems as if they had given you temporal life only that they might drag you down to eternal death! Parents, if you have no fear of God and his commandments, you should be impelled to take all possible care of the souls of your children, at least, by the thought that their eternal salvation requires that care.

II. Fathers and mothers, you give sufficient proof that you love your children. What trouble mothers cheerfully take with their little children, day and night, is best known to themselves. How fathers work, and think, and labor incessantly, so as to leave their children well off, is taught us by daily experience. But do you really desire your children's welfare? Do you really wish to do them good? Then you must not grudge them the best and greatest good, but do all you can to secure it for them, namely, to gain for them the eternal happiness of heaven. For how can they thank you afterwards for

having given them this miserable life, which is over in a few years, if you do not gain eternal life for them? How can they be grateful to you for feeding and clothing them if you prevent them from enjoying the never-ending banquet of heaven? What can they think of you, although you may have had them instructed in many branches of knowledge, if you do not give them the real wisdom of heaven, the knowledge and love of God? What is the use of your leaving them worldly riches if they lose eternal treasures through your fault? In a word, how can they be grateful to you for bringing them into the world if they cannot live forever with God in heaven? But whether your children attain this highest good or not; whether they are to burn forever in hell, or to rejoice eternally in heaven, depends mainly on yourselves, oh, parents—how you train up your children! For on their good or bad training depends the good or bad life of your children, which is terminated by a good or a bad death, and followed by a happy or a miserable eternity. Your little children, parents, are like soft wax in your hands—you can give them any shape you please. They are like young plants; do you wish them to grow up straight? It all lies with yourselves. They are like a canvas prepared for painting: you can paint on them whatever you please, a devil or an angel; an accursed, reprobate goat, or a sheep of the fold of Christ, destined for heaven.

Christian parents, how is it that there is often such a difference in the morals and life of children who are of the same age, the same condition, state, and family, who have the same faith, and have been born in the same town, the same street, the same house? If we take the trouble to examine the matter we shall find in one household that the children know all the chief parts of the catechism, that they kneel down to say their prayers every morning, and, as is the pious custom in every good Christian family, that they make their examination of conscience every evening carefully. In another house you

will find that the children get up and go to bed when they please, and that, in place of praying, they curse, swear, play, and indulge in useless conversation. In one family it is the custom for them to hear Mass every day, to go on Sundays and holydays to the sermon and to catechism, and to be sent regularly to the Sacraments. In another, the sons frequent the saloon, the daughters go into dangerous company; they neither see nor hear anything of the Word of God, or of what would benefit their souls. In one household one hardly knows that there are daughters in it at all, because they are hardly ever seen out of the church; in another, every one can easily be aware of their presence, because they spend their time at the window, or before the door, talking and laughing, even with persons of the opposite sex. In one household the children dress modestly, according to the law of Jesus Christ; in another, they ape all the vanities and extravagances of the world. In one family the sons and daughters are always occupied with work or study; in another, they are allowed to run idle about the streets, where they will certainly not learn much good. In one family they are trained to give up their own will for the sake of doing the will of God; in another, each child does as he pleases. And whence comes this great difference? From the difference in the training and teaching they received from their childhood upward. In one family the father and mother attend to their duty; in another, Christian doctrine, paternal vigilance, correction and chastisement, and good example are wanting. What wonder is it, then, that young children live as they are taught or allowed to live?

And according as children are accustomed to lead a pious or a wicked life in their youth, so will their after life be pious or wicked. "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22 : 6). The eternal happiness or the damnation of your children, then, depends on the good or bad training you give them; and therefore, if you

love them sincerely and wish to secure to them the possession of the one thing necessary, you must train them up for their last end, that is, for true piety, for God and for heaven, with the greatest care. And woe to you if you are wanting in this most important duty! Woe to you if by carelessness, or by not instructing them in the catechism and leading them on to good, or by giving them bad example, you prevent even one of your children from saving his soul, and drag him down to the eternal flames of hell! What would you think if you heard your lost children crying out from hell to God for vengeance on you, the cause of their damnation? They might say: "We are not the cause of our own ruin; our parents have ruined us: they are the murderers of our souls." We have deserved hell by our vicious lives; that we must confess! But our parents are the cause of our wickedness, and of our damnation. "Our parents are the murderers of our souls!" Our parents are the cause of that, because they did not bring us up better and train us to virtue! "Our parents are the murderers!" It is my father, the son will say, who is to blame for my damnation. He never spoke to me of any but earthly and transitory things. He hardly ever said a word to me of God and heaven. From him I learned to curse, swear, blaspheme, and give way to other sins that he was constantly committing. He never asked me, and never troubled himself about where, when, or with whom I went, whether I frequented the Sacraments, or heard Mass and sermon on Sundays and holydays, or attended catechism. If I blasphemed the Name of God, spoke ill of my neighbor, lied, cursed, or swore, he never said a word to correct me. My mother is to blame for the loss of my soul, the daughter cries out from the flames of hell. I would have been modest, reserved, and humble, according to the law of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, if she had not, as soon as I was able to walk, trained me up to all sorts of worldly pomp and vanity. I kept my virginal purity and baptismal innocence unsullied until she brought me

into dangerous company, where I learned vice and wickedness. I was pious until she sent me away to a foreign country, where I soon changed for the worse. I was chaste until she allowed me to be idle, to go about wherever I pleased, and to walk and amuse myself in the evening alone with a person of the opposite sex! Cruel father, cruel mother, if you did not intend to lead me to heaven, why did you bring me into the world? It would have been a thousand times better for me never to have seen the light of day, and to have remained in the abyss of my original nothingness. Would to God that I had been your dog, and not your son or your daughter: I would not now have to suffer these torments! You are the murderers of our souls!

Parents, what does your father's or mother's heart now say to you? What are you to do? If any of you have really a child in hell, whose damnation you are the cause of by not bringing up that child properly, what can you do now? Alas, the poor soul is lost, and you will never be able to remedy your mistake! Parents, do penance now for your past faults, that you may not be condemned to do fruitless penance for them in hell, with your unhappy child. Make up, by diligence and care with your remaining children, for the neglect with which your conscience now reproaches you. I repeat with St. Paul: "Fathers, bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord." Let it be your chief care to lead them on to the fear of God, to the love and practice of virtue, to a Christian, holy life, and to the kingdom of heaven. All your love, your labor, and trouble, nay, even your devotions and good works, are of no use, if you are guilty of deliberate and grievous neglect in this point. That is the principal duty that God and the natural law require from you in your state of life. Oh, happy parents who have now children in heaven, to pray to God for you daily, and to praise and bless him forever! Happy parents, whose greatest care hitherto has been to bring up your children to piety and virtue! What consolation it will be for

you to find yourselves one day, along with your children, at the right hand of your Judge, and to hear those children proclaiming publicly, in presence of all mankind: My father, my mother, is the cause of my eternal happiness! Christian parents, let this thought impel you to train up your children in a holy manner. Amen.

Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost.

THE REASONS WHY PARENTS SHOULD BRING UP THEIR CHILDREN IN A CHRISTIAN MANNER.

"*See that you despise not one of these little ones.*"—Matth. 18 : 10.

Children, no matter how small, how poor, how lowly they are, are of such great worth and value in the sight of God that he has given each one of them a prince of heaven as companion, tutor, and guardian; therefore: "See that you despise not one of these little ones," nor scandalize them; "for their Angels in heaven always see the Face of my Father who is in heaven." Christian parents, this warning and exhortation is addressed especially to you. Have you children under your care? "See that you despise not one of these little ones." Ah, above all, take the greatest possible care of them, so that not one may be lost! Parents, bring up your children most carefully for their last end, that is, train them to be pious, to love and fear God, so that they may attain eternal happiness. That is required by the natural and the divine law, and the eternal salvation of your children. But if that is not enough for you, I shall give you some more reasons, that ought to have even more effect on you than the first.

If you love your children, bring them up for their last end, for your own salvation and happiness depend thereon:

I. Your temporal happiness;

II. Your eternal happiness.

I. The temporal happiness that parents can expect to have from their children in this life consists in bringing up those children well, so that they are always ready to obey their parents, are always respectful, loving, and helpful to them in every possible way, and think nothing of such importance, after the service of God, as to give their parents consolation and joy. It is the debt that all children owe their parents; it is the greatest satisfaction that parents can seek and desire from their children. Consequently, if we hear of parents who enjoy that satisfaction, we say that they must be happy indeed, since they have such good children.

Christian parents, tell me, how can you hope to have that comfort and consolation from your children if you do not bring them up, from their earliest years, in the fear and love of God? No, it cannot be; for virtue, piety, and the fear of God alone can make children really obedient, respectful, and loving toward their parents. He who loves God endeavors to fulfil his holy will in all things; therefore, since the will and commandment of God is: "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Exod 20 : 12), a pious child must necessarily be most careful in observing this most important duty. On the other hand, if the son or daughter is disobedient to the father or mother, obstinate, ready to contradict them, fond of murmuring, complaining, and speaking against them, I should say at once that such children are not pious, they have not the fear of God, they are wanting in virtue, inasmuch as they do not fulfil that important commandment of childlike reverence and love toward their parents. The Holy Ghost says of pious and God-fearing children: "A wise son maketh the father glad, but a foolish

son is the sorrow of his mother" (Prov. 10 : 1). He who is unfaithful to God is unfaithful to men; he who dishonors God will not show proper respect to his parents; he who disobeys God will pay little attention to the commands and prohibitions of his parents; he who resists God will be obstinate and stiff-necked with his parents; in a word, he who does not fear to offend God will have still less fear of grieving his father and mother.

Now, parents, the conduct of your children depends principally—nay, almost entirely—on you, and on the way in which you train them. Do you wish them to be wicked and impious? They will be so if you are careless of their souls. Do you wish them to be pious and God-fearing? They will be so if you earnestly desire it and train them up to it with care from their earliest years. God will give them more or less grace to lead a pious life, according as you are more or less diligent in fulfilling your duty and in trying to make them good.

What an indescribable comfort and joy it must be for you to be able to say with truth: I am the father, or the mother, of a holy child, who is always obedient, respectful, loving, and pleasing to God and man. Suppose, on the other hand, that, through want of Christian training, your son is wicked, obstinate, unruly, given to drink and other vices, your daughter disobedient, immodest, and leading a scandalous life, so that your children are a disgrace to your family, and will obey neither you nor any one else—I leave it to yourselves to say, could there be a greater trial for a father who loves his son, or a mother who loves her daughter? Especially when the parents must say to themselves: I am the cause of this misfortune, since I did not train up my wicked son as I should have done. I am the cause, because when they first went wrong, I, through a foolish and inordinate love, did not punish nor correct them; I am the cause of it, because I gave them bad example; I am

the cause of it, because I did not keep them away from dangerous occasions and bad company!

What a sorrow it was for David, who had not punished his son Absalom for having murdered his brother, to be attacked by that son and driven from his throne, and in the end to have to hear the sad news of the temporal and eternal death of his rebellious child! How great was the grief of Jacob when the news was brought to him that his daughter Dina, whom he had allowed to go out to see the women of the country, was dishonored and disgraced! How great must have been the wailing and lamentation of those parents of whom we read that they allowed their children to go out into the street and mock the Prophet Elisæus, at seeing two-and-forty of their unhappy offspring torn to pieces by wild bears!

But it is not necessary to go back so far. Are there not parents enough nowadays who have nothing but trouble and sorrow from the very children to whom they looked for comfort and consolation in their old age, and to whom a foolish love made them too indulgent? Now they lament and complain: What an unhappy being I am! Could there be a greater trial on earth than what I have daily to suffer from my own children? It seems that my children are actually accursed by God. They cannot be induced to say a prayer, to go to church; I dare not ask them to do anything, or they will do the contrary; if I reprove them, they are sure to have a sharp answer ready. I have taken so much trouble and worked so hard to better their position, and now they are ashamed of me! They are shortening my life! My God! do I deserve to be thus treated by my own children? Yes, you have reason for asking that question; you have richly deserved to be ill-treated by your children. It is not so much a curse from God as a curse that you have brought upon yourself that you are suffering from. You have cut a rod to beat yourself with. Tell me, how have you brought up your children? What have you taught them from

their childhood? How have you punished and chastised them when they committed a fault? What sort of example have you given them? "What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap" (Gal. 6 : 8). You have, by your want of care, sown weeds, thorns, and thistles in the souls of your children. You cannot now hope to reap good wheat therefrom, but rather thistles and thorns that will pierce your heart with sorrow. You have sown curses and oaths in their still innocent ears; and now they use against you what they learned from you. You have, by your bad example, sown in their still innocent eyes vanities and follies; what else can you now expect to reap? "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matth. 7 : 16) asks Jesus Christ. No, that cannot be: "What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap." Whatever grief or trouble your children now cause you is just what you chose yourself.

And this is the just punishment that the hidden judgment of God decrees against you, oh, parents! He chastises you with that wherewith you offended him. You have offended God by not carefully training up your children, from their earliest years, to fear, obey, and love him, and now he allows them to refuse you the obedience, respect, and love they owe you. Not that your wicked children are to be excused; by no means. They will have to suffer in this life and in the next; but the divine justice wills that you should, even in this life, share in the punishment merited by your children, since you are the cause of their present perverseness by neglecting their early training. You see, then, that it depends on you, Christian parents, whether you are to have joy and consolation, or grief and trouble with your children.

II. In order to be sure of your eternal salvation you must fulfil all the duties that God has imposed on you, under pain of mortal sin. There is not the least doubt of that: "If thou

wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19 : 17). The natural and divine law, and the law of charity toward your children, tell you that you are bound to rear them in the fear and love of God. Now, if you consider the matter seriously, you will see that you commit a very grievous sin, incur a fearful responsibility before God, and that thus you cannot entertain any reasonable hopes of salvation if you do not fulfil this duty. To be the deliberate cause of leading into sin immortal souls, for whom the Son of God shed his Blood and died a shameful death, to betray them into vicious habits, to deliver them up to the devil, to deprive them of heaven and drag them down to hell, surely that is a terrible sin! It is the sin of which our Lord says: "Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh; it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matth. 18 : 6). If this is true of all men—if, I say, all these people are threatened with eternal woe, and the souls they have betrayed will be required at their hands, how will it be with you, fathers and mothers, if by your evil training or neglect of giving them good instruction, or, what is still worse, by your wicked instructions and example, you lead astray your own children, who are your own flesh and blood? What will you have to say if you deliver up to the devil those whom God has entrusted to you, that you may bring them to him? But their good or evil lives, their piety or wickedness, and consequently their salvation or damnation, depend on the training you give them from their early years.

Unhappy parents, what a fate is in store for you! What answer will you make when the great God says to you: I have given you so many sons and daughters, and entrusted them to your fatherly or motherly care, under the strictest obligation of giving them back to me again. Where are they now? Where is your son, or daughter? I find only some of your children among my chosen sheep; the others are amongst the

goats; and yet I expected that they would all serve, fear, and love me, and be happy with me forever. It is you who have estranged them from me, and given them over to the demon! And Jesus Christ will say: I have chosen you as my helpers and co-operators in the eternal salvation of your children, for whom I have shed my precious Blood, and you have sold them to my sworn enemy for a miserable price! God the Holy Ghost will also accuse you, saying: I entrusted those souls to your care, after I had chosen them and consecrated them as my temples; and now, through your negligence, they have become dens of murderers! Mary the Mother of God will also be there to accuse you: I had already taken your children under my protection in order to bring them to eternal life; but you, by your culpable carelessness, have allowed them to abandon me, and to become the prey of demons! The holy guardian Angels will complain of you: We have labored day and night to protect our charges and lead them to eternal happiness, and we found no more bitter opponents, no worse enemies on earth, than you, who should have helped us! All the Saints in heaven will cry out against you: We hoped and desired that the number of our companions in happiness would be increased by you; and now, by your negligence and the bad training you have given your children, you help to increase the number of the reprobates in hell! What answer will you make to all this, I again ask you; what judgment, what sort of a punishment can you expect?

Oh, what a fearful number of parents, even of those who have no other grievous sins to answer for, will be lost eternally because they did not bring up their children in a pious and Christian manner! A great number of parents will be lost on this account alone, that they were the cause of the loss of their children. This truth is confirmed by the fact that very little is thought of negligence in this respect, so that hardly any one makes it a matter of confession. Thus, through culpable ig-

norance, many do not confess it, nor repent of it as they ought.

Christian parents who are here present, I hope better things of you. Look upon this duty as the most important one you have to perform. Think every day: The greatest obligation that the married state places me under is to bring up my children piously and with the greatest care, that they may fear and love God. Think: The most important thing for my children is to escape hell and to gain heaven. If that thought does not influence you, then, at least, you must be moved by remembering that your own welfare is at stake, that there is question of your being happy with your children here in time, and hereafter in eternity. If you do not fulfil your duty, nor repent duly of your negligence, there can be no hope of salvation for you. Think, whenever you look at your little children: Woe to me if I should ever be the cause of these now innocent souls losing their innocence and burning in hell, and thus make myself a sharer in their damnation by bringing them up badly! On the other hand, what a consolation and joy it would be for me if I could stand before the judgment seat of Christ with my children and say to my Judge the same words that he said to his heavenly Father: "Those whom thou gavest me, have I kept; and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition;" who lost himself by his wilful obstinacy. I have brought them all up to thy service as well as I could; not one of them is lost. Behold, they are here with me; now I come with them into thy kingdom! Oh, what a consolation! It is what I wish you all, Christian parents, from my heart. May you and your children be happy together forever. Amen.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE TEACHING THAT PARENTS SHOULD GIVE THEIR CHILDREN.

"*Whose son is he?*"—Matth. 22 : 42.

If we see a child that we do not know we ask: Whose child is that? What is his name? Whose son is he? Whose daughter is she? Although I might not know either the children or their parents, yet I should guess at once from the behavior of the children how the parents bring up their children, and should say: This one is the son of parents who do not fulfil their duty; the second is the son of pious parents, who look after the souls of their children. Parents who wish to bring up their children as they ought, for their last end, must have good tongues, sharp eyes, paternal hands, and good habits: tongues to teach their children what is good; eyes, to be watchful over all their actions; hands, to punish them when necessary, in a paternal manner; good habits, so as to give them a good example of virtue and the fear of the Lord. If one of these be wanting the children will not be trained properly.

I. Those parents who have not good tongues do not rear their children properly, because they do not teach their children what is good.

II. Much less do those parents rear their children well, who have bad tongues; that is to say, who teach them evil.

I. Amongst the many miseries that we inherit from the sin of our forefather Adam is deplorable ignorance in nearly everything. No man is born learned. No matter who we are, we

bring ignorance with us into the world. It lies with us in the cradle, and remains with us for many years afterwards. Children must be taught and instructed how to speak, read, and write, nay, even how to walk and stand, eat and drink, although the beasts themselves require no instruction in these latter things. There is an art of which if they remain in ignorance they will never be happy with God in heaven; that is the art of arts; it is the only art that we must know—the art of living and dying in a Christian and holy manner. Now, it is a most deplorable fact that this art is the one of which we are most ignorant naturally, and which we find the greatest difficulty in learning, on account of our inclination to evil. Hence, in order to acquire a knowledge of it, much more time, trouble, and labor must be expended, than what a mere natural art or science would require. Even after having learned and understood that art, it is one that we forget most easily, unless we are constantly reminded of and exercised in it.

Hence if children are to attain eternal happiness, which is the chief thing for them, they must necessarily be instructed most diligently in this art from their earliest years, and must be constantly exercised in it by those on whom the duty of teaching them devolves. And who are they? You, fathers and mothers, have received this charge from God: "Teach your children," says the Lord to his people, after he had warned them to observe all his commandments faithfully: "that they meditate on them" (Deut. 11 : 19). And you must teach them constantly: "When thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest on the way, and when thou liest down and risest up," teach your children. What? "What I command you this day, that you love the Lord your God, and serve him with all your heart." God's words to parents are: "Hast thou children? instruct them from their childhood" (Eccl. 7 : 25). Mark, he does not say: "Enrich them; exalt them; but instruct them." In what? In that of which Eternal Wisdom says: "Come, chil-

dren, I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 33 : 12). What the Apostles were, as teachers of the whole world, what bishops and priests are to those under their charge, that you are, oh, parents, in your families.

But how, and in what manner, must this instruction be given? What must it treat of chiefly? That the children know how to make the sign of the Cross, to say the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Creed, as well as the Commandments of God and of the Church, and that they know all the principal parts of the Catechism by heart, seems to be enough for most parents, even for those who wish to live as pious Christians and to fulfil their parental obligations; and would to God that all parents taught their children even that much! But is this all the instruction that they owe their children? It is part of it, certainly, but not by any means all of it; for what good is it to know the faith by heart, and not to know how to live according to it? Of what use is it to be able to repeat the ten Commandments, and not to know what is commanded or forbidden by them? Nay, what good is it even to understand all this, if the children are not constantly urged to observe the truths they have learned? To be satisfied with the bare knowledge would be like trying to feed a hungry child by holding out a piece of bread to him so that he could see, but not eat it. If that mode of action were persevered in the child would die of hunger. So it is, also, with the food of the soul: it is not enough merely to present it, or to impress the Christian law and the ten Commandments on children's memories, so that they can repeat them like a parrot. They must be taught every day, clearly and earnestly, how they are to lead a pious life, according to what they have learned. They must have that food put into their mouths by frequent exhortation, so that they may practise what they have learned when opportunity offers.

In that way they must be deeply impressed with the last end

of their creation. Say to them: We are here solely for the purpose of fearing God, serving him, keeping his commandments, doing his will in all things, loving him above all things, and so, after this short life, enjoying him forever in heaven. If we do not get there it were better for us never to have been born. That must be the object of all our desires. All that we do, think, and say must be for God's sake, and to gain heaven. They must be taught to hate mortal sin and fear it more than anything else, because God is offended by it. Therefore, whatever you do, see that you never commit a mortal sin for any one, for any pleasure, or for any gain. Parents, you must teach your children from their earliest years to have a great love for the Christian virtues, especially for humility, modesty, diligence, meekness, patience, and contentment with the will of God in all things. They must be directed to the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, how obedient he was to his parents, how he was clad modestly and humbly, how poor his food was, and how many years he thus spent on earth, until he died in torments on the cross, in order to show us the way we have to go if we wish to follow him to heaven. In that way you will save them from the deceitful spirit of the vain world, and will fill them with the true spirit of Jesus Christ and his Gospel from their tenderest years. They must be taught to have a tender love and devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, and to the holy Angels guardian. To teach your children to be respectful in church and devout at prayer, you must always make them pray with folded hands before and after meals, and every morning and evening they should kneel down to pray to God and the Saints. They will learn to be merciful and charitable to the poor, if they are told to bring the alms to any poor person who is begging at the door, and they must be told, at the same time, that what is given to the poor is given to Christ.

You will find many examples of parents who have thus trained their children in the Sacred Scriptures; amongst many

others, the history of Tobias, and how he trained his son: "From his infancy he taught him to fear God, and to abstain from all sin" (Tob. 1 : 10). And how did he instruct him? Read the 4th chapter of the Book of Tobias, and you will see words there which should be constantly on the lips of parents: "Hear, my son, the words of my mouth, and lay them as a foundation in thy heart." "All the days of thy life have God in thy mind; and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God." "Thou shalt honor thy mother all the days of her life; for thou must be mindful what, and how great perils she suffered for thee." "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person, for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee." "According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care, even so, to bestow willingly a little; for thus thou storest up for thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God, to all them that give it." "Eat thy bread with the hungry and the needy, and with thy garments cover the naked." "Take heed to keep thyself, my son, from all fornication, and beside thy wife never endure to know a crime. Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words; for from it all perdition took its beginning. If any man hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all. See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another" (Tob. 4 : 13). Keep away from bad company: never eat nor drink with the wicked. "Seek counsel always of a wise man. Bless God at all times, and desire of him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in him." "Fear not, my son, we lead, indeed, a poor life, but we shall have many good things

if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good." Such were the beautiful exhortations and teachings of the pious old man; whereupon, Tobias answered his father and said: "I will do all things, father, which thou hast commanded me." The tears come to my eyes whenever I read or meditate on this chapter. Christian parents, compare with that the teaching you give your children, and see whether they both agree.

There is still another thing to be deplored, and that is, if some parents neglect their duty, and are on that account to be condemned because they do not use their tongues to instruct their children, how much more are not they to be condemned who, instead of giving good instruction, teach their children wickedness by their evil tongues and lead them into sin? Yet, alas! there is a large number of such people in the world.

II. Perhaps you think it almost an impossibility that amongst Catholic Christians parents are to be found who deliberately and wilfully teach wickedness to their sons and daughters; for that would be to change one's house into a school for the devil, to the eternal ruin of souls. And yet, I repeat, how many there are who set up such a school of perdition in their own houses, so that the devil finds no better teachers and agents in the world than many fathers and mothers, whom he makes use of to betray innocent children! It would, in truth, be much better for many sons and daughters that they had never been born, or that they had been abandoned in the streets, and had been reared in a foundling asylum. Better for them if, after Baptism, they had been put, like Moses, into a basket and been left to the mercy of the winds and waves. Better, I say, to lose their lives at once than to live and learn sin and wickedness from their parents! I will not speak here of those undoubted agents of the devil who teach their children to lie and cheat, to work on Sundays and holy-

days, to eat meat on forbidden days, to steal, to curse, to be immoral. I could not suspect decent parents of being guilty of such things. Yet there are such people in the world. My complaint shall now be directed principally against those who inspire their children with the false and lying maxims of a corrupt and perverse world, which are altogether opposed to the Christian religion, to the life and example of Jesus Christ, and to the principles of the Gospel. For instance, Christ, by his example, and in his Gospel, says that the poor in spirit are blessed (Matth. 5 : 3), and condemns the greed of gold: "Woe to you that are rich" (Luke 6 : 24); to you who set your hearts on riches. Now, some parents daily teach their children the contrary, and tell them that happiness consists in being very wealthy. See, they say, that gentleman, that merchant, how well he has got on in a short time by his industry. What a beautiful house he has! What a rich inheritance he has succeeded to! He is certainly fortunate. How well that son, that daughter, is married! What would you think, my child, if such good luck fell to your share? Such teaching as that makes a very strong impression on tender minds, so that they afterwards come to look upon money and riches almost as their god. Christ says: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matth. 11 : 29). "Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Ibid. 18 : 3). If you are invited by any one, "sit down in the lowest place" (Luke 14 : 10). But what do parents say? My son, my daughter, you are as good as such and such a one. You must not give way to them, nor yield to them; you are superior to them in rank and position. "I say to you," says Christ, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you" (Matth. 5 : 44). What do parents say when their children suffer anything from another? My child, will you put up with that? Can you not defend yourself? Will you let yourself be treated

in that way? Many fathers are quite pleased to see their sons fighting. If they are victorious the fathers even praise them, and say: The young fellow has courage; he will turn out well some day!

How do mothers sometimes instruct their daughters, who would otherwise willingly be pious and devout? Is it according to the teaching of Christ: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world"? (1 John 2 : 15.) Is it according to the teaching of St. Paul, who condemns all superfluous, and much more all scandalous luxury in dress, and who even tells women to veil their faces on account of the Angels? No, indeed; quite the contrary. Go to your father, they say, and tell him you want another dress; you ought to be ashamed to appear like that in the streets. What will people think when they see their own children better dressed than you? Sometimes the daughters say to their mothers: I have heard in the sermon that it is not right to dress in that way, or to follow that fashion, and that it might give scandal. What! says the mother, let preachers say what they like. They do not understand these things, nor how people must live in the world. Everything they say is not Gospel. We must not mind them, but do as others do. Other pious people do the same, and we do not want to be any better than they! You must be dressed as I wish. There are daughters who, through natural bashfulness or through a love of virginal purity, wish to remain quietly at home, to avoid the society of the other sex, and to occupy themselves in some lawful manner, and the mothers, who ought to strengthen them in that good resolution and approve of their modesty, cannot bear it, and drag them about into all sorts of company. What! they say, you must not be bashful, but friendly with people. You must learn how to go about and let yourself be seen; otherwise, who will have you? Thus their innocent souls, even without their own knowledge and consent, are filled with the love of idleness and vanity, and are

led astray on the broad road by those who should lead them to humility, modesty, virtue, and heaven.

I have seen little girls who were taught by their parents to dance like ballet girls. It must have taken a deal of time and trouble to teach them all that. When I saw it I could not help sighing to myself, and saying: What a wretched lesson for their immortal souls! I saw the father and mother laughing and enjoying the scene when their little children sang impure love songs, or repeated conversations of the same character. They even ordered the children to begin again, so as to prolong their pleasure. Alas! what a training for Christian children! There are parents, too, who cannot bear to see their children piously inclined. They cry down piety in every way possible. See, they say, what a devotee we have! That boy will be good for nothing; he is too pious; we shall not know what to make of him; he is only fit for a priest. These are the fine lessons that many parents give their children nowadays! What wonder is it that the latter, reared in such a school, grow up to be vain and foolish? Wicked parents, for whom do you bring up your children? Have you had them baptized, that they might serve under the standard of Jesus Christ, or under that of the devil?

Christian parents, teach your children from their childhood "to love the Lord their God," that they may serve him alone with all their hearts. If you know not how, or cannot undertake to perform the office of a Christian teacher, and instruct your children in goodness, then send them where they will get proper instruction from others. Bring them with you to sermons, although they may be still very young; they will hear many salutary things that will be for the advantage of their souls their whole lives long. They will at least have a wish to hear the Word of God from their tenderest years, and that is a sign of predestination. And you, too, will learn much that you can afterwards teach your children. If you do not do even that much (and, alas! there are many who hardly go to a ser-

mon once in a year, through indolence and laziness, or through fear of being disturbed in conscience!), what wonder is it that you and your children live and die in culpable ignorance of what concerns your eternal welfare? What wonder is it that you live a sensual life, according to the fashion of the world?

You must send your children every Sunday to catechism. If the mother is not able to nurse her child, does she neglect it altogether? No, for she would thus cause the child's death; she hires some one who can take care of it in her place. In the same way, if some parents do not know how to instruct their children, they must not, therefore, allow the souls of the latter to perish. If they did so they would be murderers in a spiritual sense; and therefore they must have recourse to others, who will teach their children for them. Alas, what great negligence parents are often guilty of in this respect, too! So that ecclesiastical superiors must often compel them, by penalties, to send their children to catechism. Who ever heard that a magistrate had to compel people to look after their cows, and sheep, and pigs, and goats? But the souls of poor children are left without any one to attend to them! It was that thought which so often drew tears from St. John Chrysostom. He says: "We take more care of our asses and horses, than of the souls of our children." Certainly, what the Emperor Augustus used to say of Herod: "It is better to be Herod's pig than his child," might be affirmed of many Christians.

Therefore, "teach your children," or at least see that they are taught by others. Think often, for your consolation, that there is no work more holy, nor more divine, than to co-operate in the salvation of souls. You can daily practise zeal for souls, and for souls that are most closely connected with you. Spare neither care nor labor herein! You could not find a better employment. Rejoice at the promise made by God: "They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars to all eternity" (Dan. 12 : 3). Amen.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE WATCHFULNESS OF PARENTS OVER THEIR CHILDREN.

"*Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.*"—Matth. 9 : 2.

Christ could say that; for no one but God can forgive sin, except those to whom he has given that power. Christian parents, God has given you great power over your sons and daughters! But he has not empowered you to forgive them their sins. Oh, if you had that power! If you could say, whenever your children are guilty of sin: "Be of good heart, son," or daughter, "thy sins are forgiven thee," it would be easy for you, then, to bring up your children to heaven. But what am I saying? You can bestow on them a still greater benefit than the forgiveness of their sins. What is that? You can, if you manage matters properly, prevent your children from committing any grievous sin, so that they do not need forgiveness; and that depends upon your giving them a Christian training. I have treated, last Sunday, of the good tongue, that is, the good instruction that is necessary to a Christian training. But that alone is not enough: you must also have sharp eyes, so as to watch carefully over all their actions, as I shall show in to-day's instruction.

Parents who wish to bring up their children for heaven, in a Christian manner, and to keep them from sin, must be watchful over all their actions.

When children see that no one is looking after them they are generally wild and naughty. We can see that in a school

where a lot of little boys are sitting together. As long as the teacher is there, and looking about him, they are all as quiet and diligent as possible. There is not a word to be heard, unless when they are repeating their lessons. But if the teacher turns his back for a moment some begin to whisper and talk together; and if he goes out of the school altogether, and they know that he is wanted outside, what a noise they make then! There is nothing to keep them quiet but the sharp eye and unceasing vigilance of a teacher.

A Christian household in which there are little boys and girls is nothing but a school, over which the father and mother are placed by God as teachers to instruct their children in the Christian faith, and to bring them up to virtue, piety, and the fear of the Lord, that they may live well and die happily. Now, if parents fulfil this duty and often teach and exhort their children to good, they do a great work, that is unfortunately rarely done nowadays, even by Christians. But what good is it all if they do not continually watch their children to see if their instructions are followed? If the children find out that they can go where they like, out of sight of their parents; that they can go with whom they like, and do what pleases them best, what will become of their conduct then? It is only their father and mother, whose authority is from God, who can keep them in order; and therefore God has inspired children with a natural respect for their parents.

No child is so naughty and disobedient as not to be afraid of doing anything unlawful before its father or mother, unless it is neglected and trained to evil from its infancy. No child is so good, modest, and inclined to virtue as not to be guilty of a few pranks now and then, when its parents are not looking. When did the prodigal son begin to drink, and gamble away his money, and live riotously? Was it not when he went to a foreign land, away from under his father's eye? For he certainly would not otherwise have dared to lead such a wicked

life. Moses was placed by God over the people of Israel as their leader and law-giver. He gave them many pious exhortations to be always faithful to God, and yet when he went away from them for a short time to the mountains how did they act? "The people, seeing that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, gathering together against Aaron, said: Arise, make us gods, that may go before us" (Exod. 32 : 1). Nor did they stop until they had brought him all their golden earrings, out of which he made a golden calf, and set it up for them to adore, and to offer sacrifice to. "And the people sat down to eat, and drink, and they rose up to play" (Exod. 6). Old and sensible people, who had preserved their fidelity to the true God in the midst of the persecutions of Egypt; that chosen people, who had seen so many wonders of the divine goodness always accompanying them in their journeys, now abandoned the true God, because their leader and law-giver was away from them for a short time! What may we not, then, expect of children, who are unable to govern themselves on account of their youth; who do not yet feel much desire for a supernatural end or motive, and who are inclined to all sorts of distractions and amusements when they are left to themselves by their leaders and guides, their fathers and mothers? What must become of them if they fall into the hands of wicked, ill-reared children, from whom they can learn nothing good, and by whom they will be led into sin, if the vigilance of the parents does not save them?

Therefore, for a Christian training to be given in the proper way, it is absolutely necessary that parents should keep a watchful eye on all the actions of their children, so as to see how they live and what they do; what evil they commit; what good they do; whether they fear and love God; whether they go to Mass every day; whether, and how often, they go to confession and Communion; whether they attend sermons and catechism; when they go to bed, and when they get up; whether they say their morning and evening prayers devoutly; when, where,

with whom they go out; what they learn from their teacher; whether they can hear, see, or learn anything evil from the servants in the house; how the relatives of the family and the neighbors act with regard to them when they are allowed to visit them; whether the children with whom they play are well or ill-reared; what books they read. Every care must be taken to keep them constantly occupied in some lawful manner. They must never be allowed to remain idle, for that would give the devil every opportunity of leading them into all kinds of sin and vice. They must be carefully kept away from dangerous company, and even from the least occasion of sin. Without this care and watchfulness all your teaching and exhorting will be of no avail.

This was the principal thing with all pious, God-fearing parents who wished to bring up their children for heaven. When Sara saw her son Isaac playing only once with Ishmael, the son of her handmaid, she could not rest until the latter and her son were turned out of the house. Jacob, too, was ill at ease when his sons, although they were grown up, were away from him, minding their flocks. His father's heart was filled with anxiety to know what they were doing, and how they were getting on. Therefore he used to send his beloved son Joseph to them: "Go," he said, "and see if all things be well with thy brethren, and bring me word again what is doing" (Gen. 37:14). The same anxiety troubled Isai when his sons were absent from him, and therefore he sent David to see, not merely what they were doing, but in what company they were. "Go, see thy brethren, if they are well, and learn with whom they are placed" (1 Kings 17 : 18).

What a great want there is in this respect with most parents! Some are occupied with far different things the whole day, either at home or elsewhere. The last thing that troubles them is to look after the children. They are very curious about what is going on in town, or in the country, or in the homes of

other people. They pay no attention to what occurs in their own homes, or to what their sons and daughters are doing. Sometimes they do not see their children for the whole day, unless at meals. They allow them to go out when they please, to stand talking in the streets, or at the door, in the morning, the evening, or even at night, with whom they like. How can that have a good effect on young people? Do they watch over the actions of their children when they are allowed to run through the streets as they like, boys and girls together, Christians and Jews, playing, shouting, fighting with each other in full liberty? I have myself seen, with much bitterness of heart, girls of ten, eleven, and twelve years of age, of decent families, playing with very wild and naughty boys in the public streets. Is that the way to exercise parental vigilance, when sometimes all the neighbors can speak of the wilfulness, wickedness, and vices of certain children, while the fathers and mothers know nothing at all about them? So little do they watch over their children! Alas, unhappy children, whose father and mother think as little of you as a runaway dog! People are anxious enough to know if the sheep and cows have come home at the proper time in the evening from the pasturage; but they trouble themselves very little to know whether their sons and daughters are at home early in the evening.

Those parents sin in this respect who allow their children, and particularly their grown-up daughters, to have free intercourse with persons of the opposite sex, although it may be in their own houses, and under the pretext of securing a suitable match; also they who permit their engaged children to be alone with the person whom they are about to marry. To leave two people of opposite sexes alone; two who love each other foolishly; two who know that they will soon be married! Oh! the countless sins that are committed in such circumstances by impure desires, looks, and actions! How many lose their virtue thereby, before their marriage! How can there be luck or

grace in a marriage that is begun by offending God? Careless parents, what answer will you give hereafter to your just Judge, if you deliberately, or through carelessness, allow your children to act thus, and make yourselves responsible for the sins they commit; and if they do not commit sin you leave them, at least, in the proximate danger of it? Yet so many fathers and mothers think so little of it that these sins are hardly ever mentioned in confession, and never repented of and atoned for!

What sort of care do those parents take of their children who not only allow them to do what they like at home, and to go out walking and talking when and with whom they please, but even place them beyond their reach, in such a way that they could not watch over them, even if they wished to do so?

Finally, what must I say and think of those parents who are not only careless in watching over their children, so as to keep them from sin and its dangers, but actually lay snares for them at home and elsewhere, and lead them into the occasions of sin? What a fearful thing! Many fathers go to the saloon—their sons must go with them; mothers go into company, and bring their daughters with them into places which ought to be shunned by young people who wish to preserve their innocence. They have pictures in their houses, and statues in their gardens, that no man or woman, not to speak of curious children, could look at without being scandalized. They allow their little boys and girls to occupy the same bed. They are not at all cautious of what they say in their presence, and are very remiss in teaching them Christian modesty. Thus the poor children learn wickedness in their very tenderest years. Christian parents, poverty does not excuse you from the duty of seeing that your children are never placed in the occasion of violating modesty. Are they still innocent? Then keep them so; but they will not long remain so, unless you are very careful. The philosopher Aristotle says that children begin to dream in their fourth or fifth year; I go a little farther, and say that they begin to hear

and see in their fourth or fifth year, or even earlier. And although they cannot sin, because they have not the use of reason, yet many sins can be caused in after life by what they hear and see in their childhood. If we were to ask many of the perverse, corrupt youths of our times what Jesus Christ asked the father in the Gospel: How long is your son in this miserable state? They could answer, as that father did: "From infancy" (Mark 9 : 20). How long have you been so wicked? From infancy. When did you learn to commit that sin? From my very childhood. I learned it from my parents, from my brothers and sisters at home.

Christian parents, be watchful over the actions of your children from their very infancy if you wish to preserve them from sin and to keep them in the fear of God. If you had a hundred eyes you should keep them all open for this purpose; but you have only two, and therefore must be all the more careful. You should inspire yourselves with a holy fear by thinking: I must one day stand before my Judge to answer for the sins of my children, if I have been the cause of them by a want of vigilance. Nor must you imagine that this is too unjust or severe toward you, for you judge in the same way of others. If your watch goes wrong, you accuse the watchmaker, and say that he does not know his business. If you see a child with a distorted foot, you get indignant, and think that if the mother or the nurse had been more careful the foot would have been all right. And in the same way the divine Judge will say, when he sees a son or a daughter living in an unchristian manner: Father and mother, what have you been doing? Why have you allowed the unfortunate children to be thus perverted? And what answer will you make to him? You may say: I have not perverted them, they have done it themselves. I could not prevent them from leading wicked lives. But the Judge will answer: You should have been more watchful over them in their youth. I look upon you as the first cause of their destruction.

And such is really the case, Christians! You have, for instance, a clerk in your shop, to whom you give a yearly salary on condition that he looks after your goods and takes care of them. Now, suppose that, while you are absent, the clerk goes to sleep and a thief comes in and steals your things; what would you say in that case to the clerk? Unfaithful servant, you would cry out, full of anger, you must either make good the loss or go to prison! But why? What has the poor man done? He went to sleep when he should have remained awake. But there is no harm in that; when a man is asleep he can do no evil. But he should have kept his eyes open, and not allowed my things to be stolen. He is the cause of the loss I have suffered; he must go to prison! You are quite right; for, according to every law, he who has charge of anything is responsible for injuries that happen to it through his negligence. Fathers and mothers, the most precious treasures you have are the immortal souls of your children, whom God has confided to your care with the promise of eternal happiness, if you are faithful in your duty. But if you go to sleep, and do not watch over your children, so that the devil comes and steals one of them away, then woe to you when you appear before God! How can you make good that irreparable loss? Do not say: What have I done? I have not taught my children anything bad, nor given them bad example, and I have often exhorted them to fear God. That may be; but you have slept when you should have been awake. You were wanting in vigilance, and so your son or daughter is lost. I will require their souls at your hands, the Judge will say to you. Think, too, for your consolation, how much you may do for the honor and glory of God, if by your watchfulness you can save your children even from one mortal sin, and how much you can do for the salvation of souls if you bring them, by your diligence, to heaven, along with yourselves. What a pleasing and joyful sight it will be for you on that day when St. Peter will appear with the thou-

sands of Jews that he converted, St. Paul with the countless multitudes of heathens that he gained over to Christ, and the other Apostles and missionaries, preachers, confessors and priests, with all the souls that they instructed and led to heaven! Ah, parents, do what you can now, so as to be able to take your place amongst them, with your children at your side, and say to your Judge: Behold, I have kept those souls, and saved them by my watchfulness! With what joy and gladness you will then hear the happy words: "Well done, good and faithful servant;" thou faithful father; thou good mother! "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things," in being watchful over a few souls, "I will place thee over many things;" come, "enter," with thy children, "into the joy of thy Lord" (Matth. 25 : 23). Amen.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE DUE CHASTISEMENT OF CHILDREN.

"*Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into exterior darkness.*"—Matth. 22 : 13.

Christian parents, you must either raise your hands to punish, when necessary, the misdeeds of your children in this life, or you must see them bound hand and foot and cast into exterior darkness in the next life. Which of the alternatives do you choose? What do you think, children? Is it not better for children to shed a few tears and suffer a little pain now and then here, than to be cast into the gloomy lake of fire, where there is eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth? No doubt you will choose the first. And that is exactly what is necessary in order to avoid the second; that is to say, children must

sometimes weep here to escape eternal wailing hereafter. Parents must punish and chastise their children here, that they may not be obliged to see them bound and cast into exterior darkness hereafter. And this is the third requisite for a Christian training. The tongue of the parent must be good, to instruct the children in piety and lead them on to it; the eyes must be good, to keep constant watch over them; and the hands, too, must be made use of to inflict due punishment on them.

I. Parents, who wish to bring up their children in a Christian manner, must chastise them in a parental way, when necessary.

II. Many parents are guilty of grievous neglect in this point.

I. There is a duty imposed by God on all men, although it is often disregarded, and that is the duty of fraternal correction. By that every one is bound, under pain of sin, to restrain his neighbor from sin, or, if the latter has already sinned, to warn him, and, if he continues obstinate, to accuse him to others who will have more influence over him. This obligation binds him who prudently foresees that he will easily be able to restrain, reprove, or accuse his neighbor, so that his correction will benefit the latter. This is the express command of Jesus Christ: "If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he listens to you, you have saved your brother's soul. If he despises your warning, take some one else with you as a witness, and repeat it. If you still find no trace of improvement—"And if he will not hear them, tell the Church" (Matt. 17 : 15-17)—"accuse him to his superiors." Thus a neighbor is bound to tell the parents on their son or daughter, and the master and mistress on their servants, if they see the latter committing any sin unknown to the former. Thus, also, every one who notices anything danger-

ous in a house, and who prudently hopes to make matters better, is bound to make known the circumstances to those who are able to remove the danger. This is required by the law of Christian charity and fraternal correction.

Christian parents may learn therefrom what a great obligation is imposed on them by God to punish their children in a parental manner, and to chastise them if they commit a fault, or do anything wrong; for if even strangers, who have nothing to do with your children, except that they are their neighbors, are bound to correct them when necessary, I say, how much greater and stricter is the obligation of the father and mother in such a case, since they have given life to their children and are bound to keep them from evil, and to lead them on to virtue and to heaven? And there can be less doubt about this since God has given parents such great authority over their children, and has inspired children with such great reverence and respect for their parents. A father or mother who admonishes a child seriously, or speaks a word of warning, or gives it a single threatening look, can do more to correct it than any one else could by beating it. Without your correction and chastisement, parents, there is no use in anything that others may do. What good can teachers do your children if you tolerate in the latter what ought to be punished? How can the preacher or the confessor induce them to amend their vicious lives if you allow them to act as they please when they are not in church, at the sermon, or in the confessional, and if, after you have noticed a few times that they are given to certain faults, you do not earnestly admonish and chastise them? No, it is all useless; you will never rear good children, no matter how much you preach to and teach them, no matter how watchful you are over their conduct, unless you punish and chastise, in a parental manner, their faults and vices.

If you, Christian parents, wish to perform the duty of rearing your children properly, you must not spare the rod of chastise-

ment when it is useful and necessary. "He that loveth his son frequently chastiseth him, that he may rejoice in his latter end, and not grope after the doors of his neighbors. A horse not broken becometh stubborn, and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him, and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him lest thou have sorrow, and at the last thy teeth be set on edge. Give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of the heart to thee" (Ecclus. 30 : 1, 8-12). Fathers and mothers, mark these words; learn from them how earnestly you must correct and chastise your children, from their earliest years, and that you must not spare the rod on your sons and daughters while they are young, if you wish to be saved from the necessity of applying it to them when they are grown up. In their childhood you must not allow the least sign of anger, vindictiveness, untruthfulness, disobedience, frivolity, or vanity to go unpunished, so that these weeds may not take deeper root and become more difficult to pull up afterwards. There is no doubt that it is indispensably necessary for parents to corect and chastise the faults and misdeeds of their children; and if this were done by all fathers and mothers in a proper manner, the morals and lives of Christians would be far better than they now are; but herein lies the great fault of many parents.

II. The natural love for very young children is so inordinate and foolish with many mothers, and, what is still more surprising, with many fathers, that they fear to distress their children by saying a single cross word to them. They give them everything they ask for; they fulfil their every desire as quickly as possible, so as to avoid the grief and sorrow that the tears of their children would cause them. They are children, they say;

we must have patience a little longer. And when the little ones notice that they soon become lords and masters over their own parents, and the latter must obey their every command and slightest wish, like most dutiful servants; for they know how to use the weapons that they have already found to be so powerful, that is, their tears.

Is that the way to love children and bring them up in a Christian manner? Does it not rather tend to make them stubborn, impudent, obstinate, wilful, and disobedient, so that it will be impossible afterwards to correct them of those faults? And what are you doing by this over-indulgence but cutting a rod to beat yourselves? For you are rearing up a disobedient son, a wilful daughter, who will afterwards occasion you much grief and anxiety. Hence the Holy Ghost says: "Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid," when he grows up; "play with him, and he will make thee sorrowful," and turn thy laughter into tears. "The child that is left to his own will bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29 : 15). How many parents there are who now experience the truth of that, in the torment that they have with their children, because thy did not punish and chastise them in their youth! If they had done so the children would now be obedient and respectful to them. As it is, the poor parents come weeping and complaining; but to what purpose? They may thank themselves for the troubles they have. It is too late to do anything now. The tree has grown up crooked, and cannot be straightened.

Again, parents sin by the same foolish love—or shall we rather call it hatred and anger—toward their children, when they correct their grown-up sons and daughters in the way in which the high-priest Heli corrected his children; that is, by mere words. They curse and swear, and threaten all sorts of things to their children, but never fulfil their threats, because they are afraid to cause pain to their dear son or daughter; and yet they know by experience that their threats have not the

least effect. What an unchristian and foolish love that is! Now, father, pay attention. You hear from well-meaning friends, you see and know yourself that your son plays truant from school and church, and spends his time running about the streets with bad boys; that he can curse and swear, and gamble, and drink; that he does not go to catechism or sermon on Sundays and holydays; that he never says his morning and evening prayers. Ah, your son is in great danger! Help him at once, or he will be lost forever! Mother, if you see that your daughter is too vain and frivolous in her behavior; that she is too free in company; that she idles about the house, and sometimes in the street; that she is not restrained enough in the company of some friend or neighbor of the opposite sex; that she laughs and jokes with him alone in the garden, or at the house door late at night—then is the time to help your child, for she will otherwise be ruined. Now, what will you do in such circumstances? You may stretch out your hand to save your child, that is, you venture on a mild expostulation, as Heli did: "Why do ye these kind of things which I hear, very wicked things, from all the people? Do not so, my sons, for it is no good report I hear" (1 Kings 2 : 23). In the same way you say to your children: My son, that is not right; my daughter, that is not becoming; you must not do that. Well-reared daughters must stay at home, and employ themselves in some suitable work. Have you not heard what was said in the sermon, that children who act as you do are in danger of losing their souls? Girls who act in such a manner will never get good husbands. But what is the use of all that talk? It will not save your children from the danger in which they are. They are sinking deeper and deeper: you must exert yourself to more purpose, and stretch forth your arm to help them; that is to say, you put on an angry countenance and threaten them, saying: Take care, if you do not amend I will punish you severely; I have a rod in pickle for you. But these threats are of no use either. They

frighten only for the moment; the children are used to them, and they know that they are only harmless thunderstorms, without lightning. They appear to tremble, but in reality they are laughing at you in their sleeves, and they think: Oh, I have heard that often enough! Thus they are on the point of sinking altogether, and you must chastise them seriously and in a parental manner, until they show signs of improvement, not merely in words, but in deeds. But, alas! the mother says, and sometimes the father, too, although he should have more sense, I cannot bear to beat the darling child! Children must not be ruled with the rod! No? then the darling child must go to ruin, while you, father and mother, look on, and prefer to see your son or daughter howling amongst the devils forever rather than cause them to shed a few tears here on earth by your parental chastisement! Do you think your children will thank you hereafter for such a foolish love? How could they?

Still more foolish are they who not only refuse to punish their children when the latter do amiss, but even do not permit other well-meaning persons to perform this duty. Sometimes a child is punished in school for a fault; it knows that the punishment was deserved, and is very careful not to say a word to father or mother about the matter. But if the parents hear of the punishment, what a noise they make! They call the teacher an unmannerly, coarse, and savage person, instead of thanking him for what he has done. And that, sometimes, even in presence of the children, although the latter would otherwise bear their punishment patiently enough. A fine way that to rear children! Sometimes a neighbor comes with the best possible intentions, and says to the father or mother, as he is in duty bound: I have heard so and so of your son, or daughter; I myself have seen them act in such and such a way; I thought it right to tell you, that you may correct them in time. Whereupon the parents get quite angry and say; It is not true; it is false; mind your own children and leave me to manage mine.

Sometimes a sensible father wishes to do his duty in this particular, when the mother rushes up, crying and screaming: You murderer, do you want to kill the child? Or, on the other hand, as is also frequently the case, a pious mother is determined to administer due punishment to her child, but she is prevented by the foolish father. Thus the children have a protector, to whom they know they can fly for refuge when they have done wrong, and of course they trouble themselves little about the faults they commit, or about the threats of punishment they hear. I have known children who dared to say to their mother, who was about to punish them: "Wait till my father comes home; I will tell him, and then you must look out." Ah, blind parents, is that the way you love your children? Do you not see that such apparent mildness and mercy is, in reality, the greatest cruelty that you could practise toward them? You drive your unfortunate children to a terrible death, that of their immortal souls, by your false love, since you do not punish them when you ought.

In conclusion, I address you, children. You will henceforth have no very good opinion of me. You will say that I have taken your part very badly to-day, for I know well that you do not like to hear anything of beatings and punishment. The rod is an ugly thing that you would rather see in the fire than in the hands of your parents. Yet, you may believe me when I say that there could be nothing better for you than the subject of to-day's sermon, and you will one day thank me for having spoken to your parents, apparently against, but really for, your advantage. If your father and mother are too indulgent to you, so that you are thus led into evil ways, you will one day be the first to utter complaints against them, and your complaints will be eternal. Such was the complaint of St. Augustine against his father: "The thorns of lust," he says, "were growing over my head, and there was no one to pull them up." And what will you say, children, if through want of chastise-

ment, you grow up wicked and lose your souls? That you may not then have to complain fruitlessly, do not complain now; but be glad and thank your parents when they chastise you, in a parental manner, for the faults you commit. Kiss the rod as a token of submission and gratitude to your parents for the great benefit they have thereby conferred on you, so that you may rejoice with them in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE PATERNAL CHASTISEMENT OF CHILDREN.

"*Lord, come down before that my son die.*"—John 4 : 49.

The father was careful of his son's life! After having tried every means in vain, he at length ventured to ask Jesus Christ to heal his son by a miracle. So much concerned was this father for the temporal life of his son. Perhaps if the latter had been in danger of eternal death his father would not have been so uneasy. Oh, how many parents there are in our days who trouble themselves very little about that danger! If their children are suffering from bodily illness, and are in danger of death, how they weep and lament! Every means is tried to save the beloved child's life, and to restore it to health; but if the soul is sick and dead through sin, hardly any one is concerned about it. There is still another point to be observed in connection with this duty, and that is, how chastisement is to be inflicted so that the children may be made better thereby, and be brought to eternal life. Many parents punish their children when the latter commit a fault, but they do not do it properly, and therefore do more harm than good to the souls of their children.

I. This chastisement must be inflicted with a good intention.

II. With moderation and parental love.

I. Everything must be done for the honor and glory of God, Christian parents, and consequently and especially the chastisement and correction of your children, when it is necessary, must be directed to the glory of God as to its proper end. You must have no other intention, when inflicting it, but to amend your children's way of life, keep them from sin, and lead them on to good, even by violent means.

1. That end is altogether disregarded, first by those parents who inflict punishment according to the humor they are in. If they are in a bad humor, if they are annoyed and put out about something, oh, then the children had better keep out of their way, for if the least thing goes wrong they beat them unmercifully, and do not always distinguish between the innocent and the guilty. If they are in a good humor, they are ready to overlook any number of faults and shortcomings, although they may be committed before their very eyes. That is not the way to inflict punishment for the glory of God, because God has commanded it, and the salvation of the children requires it. It is inflicting punishment because the father or mother is out of temper.

2. Those parents also fail in this point who use the rod only when the children are guilty of a fault that vexes the father or mother, while they allow serious faults to remain unpunished because they are not angry, nor displeased, nor hurt by them. For instance, a wilful child breaks a glass through love of mischief; the father or mother immediately beats the child severely. And quite deservedly, too. But on another occasion the same child curses or swears, or uses indecent language, by which God alone is offended. That is another thing altogether; it is passed over unnoticed, or at most a half threat is uttered to deter the

child from such expressions. So that the punishment was not inflicted for the proper end in the first case, nor because God was angry at the fault committed, but solely because the parents were vexed at the loss they sustained.

3. Thirdly, those parents do not punish as they ought who beat their children in anger when the latter deserve it, but immediately afterwards commence to caress and talk kindly to them, to show that they are sorry and wish to be forgiven. That is clear proof that neither the amendment of the fault, nor the glory of God, was the reason why they inflicted the punishment, but simply a desire of giving vent to their anger. Such chastisement is neither parental nor salutary; it should be earnest and serious, so that the children may learn by experience that every fault they commit will be punished, and may see by the continued displeasure of their parents how great the wrong is that they have committed.

4. Fourthly, there are parents who make a difference between their children when punishing them, and who thereby commit a grievous error. For instance, there are in the same family two boys and two girls. One son and one daughter are never looked upon as guilty by their parents, while the other two are never able to please them; so that whatever happens the first two are never wrong, and the others never right. Every venial sin of the latter is magnified into a mortal sin, while if the former commit a fault that ought to be punished, the father and mother only laugh and are amused at it. But if the latter are guilty of the same fault, their parents have only sour looks, and cross words, and even blows for them. What is the cause of this different treatment? The fault is the same in both cases, and deserves the same punishment, in order to be corrected. Yes, that is true, but the one son and daughter are their parents' favorites, or their grandmother's pets. They must not be beaten, nor spoken crossly to; that would cause too much sorrow to the father, or mother, or grandmother! The

others, who are sometimes more beloved by God, "have not yet found favor" with their parents, either because they are not so beautiful and clever as the former, or because they are a little stupid and backward, or suffer from some other natural defect, for which they are not to be blamed, as it is inborn in them; therefore they get all the beatings and cannot stir in the house, while the favorites may do as they please. What an injustice, what a wrong! Is that the way to punish children with a good intention, for the glory of God and for their last end, and to correct their faults? The punishment that you inflict on the child whom you care less for, can do it little good, and will only serve to embitter and render it desperate. For it is quite able to see that the punishment does not come from parental affection and love, but from hatred and dislike. A necessary consequence of this favoritism is envy, discord, and enmity between brothers and sisters, which sinks deep into the tender minds of children, and remains with them their whole lifetime. The Sacred Scripture says of Jacob: "Now Israel loved Joseph above all his sons" (Gen. 37 : 3). And what was the consequence? Nothing but bitterness, envy, and vindictiveness amongst the brothers of Joseph, which they made him feel. "They could not speak peaceably to him." They wished to kill him: "Behold, the dreamer cometh; come, let us kill him." They cast him into a deep pit, to let him die of hunger, but when the Ishmaelite merchants passed by, they sold him as a slave into a distant land, and caused his father great sorrow. The same faults must be punished in the same manner, without any distinction; all the children must be treated with the same affection and the same severity, if their good or ill-conduct is alike; nor is there any other way of making punishment profitable to them.

5. Those parents do not punish their children with a proper motive who, in place of chastisement, or while administering it, give way to cursing, swearing, or abusive language against

their children. Is that a Christian, or a parental way of punishing a child? Can that be for the glory of God, since God is offended and his commandment is broken in the very act? Can there be any inducement to amendment, to avoid sin, or to practise virtue, in a chastisement which teaches children wickedness, and induces them to follow their parents' bad example, so that they, too, curse and swear? Is that chastisement salutary, and apt to make children more obedient and respectful to their parents, and more ready to follow their advice in future, by which children lose all respect and esteem for their parents, and have not only a bad opinion of them, but even hate and detest them on account of their horrible habit of cursing? No; all such chastisements are not administered for a good end, and therefore they cannot help either the parents to merit, or the children to amend. But, in addition to the proper end it must have, chastisement must also be inflicted with discretion and parental love.

II. Christian parents, you must use discretion in chastising your children! The faults that your sons and daughters commit are the maladies of their souls, which, if not cured in time, will cause them eternal death. You are the physicians of their souls. God has entrusted you with that office, and the medicine you have to administer is parental correction and chastisement.

1. Just as too much medicine often does more harm than good, so those parents do not correct their children properly who always cuff or beat them or pull their ears for the least fault, and who never overlook anything, but punish the slightest mistakes even more severely than they do serious ones. The children are not improved by that; on the contrary, they become dulled and callous, so that they do not feel the punishment; like an old horse that is so accustomed to bit and spur that neither has any effect on him in the end. The correction of children

does not always consist in beating and striking them, especially when such punishment is inflicted too frequently. Parental chastisement is a medicine that must be given at a suitable time, and it must not be used as daily food. Sometimes, especially when a fault is committed for the first time, a cross look, at other times a serious threat, has more effect than any amount of beating, in making children amend their shortcomings.

2. As a skilful and prudent physician studies the constitution of his patients, so also parents must always take into account the characters of the children whom they are about to punish. When they are still very young, and have not come to the full use of reason, they require far different treatment from that which would suit them when they are more advanced in years. Little children must be governed by fear, and therefore, if they do anything wrong, they must be made to feel the rod. But with other children this means is not always salutary. The rod should be the last resource, just as burning and cutting are the last resources with sick people, and should not be used until all other means have failed. But when it is used, it should be done in earnest, so that a second application may not be necessary. Yet it must always be done with due regard for parental affection. Hence those stern fathers are wrong who make their poor children tremble and fly before them, as if they had seen a wild beast. Of such parents the Wise Man says: "Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household" (Eccl. 4 : 35). No; children should have a child-like, and not a servile fear of their parents. They must be corrected and punished, certainly, but in the same way in which the heavenly Father corrects his elect children; he sends them many trials and crosses during their lives, but only because he loves them, and because he wishes them thereby to atone for their past sins, to be freed from vicious inclinations, or to be strengthened in virtue, and thus to acquire greater merit for themselves and greater glory in heaven. With the same par-

ental affection should the rod be used on children, with the sole purpose of punishing their faults and vices.

3. Therefore it is advisable for parents never to punish their children immediately after a fault, and while they still feel angry. They should wait till their anger is over, although they might then be obliged to defer the punishment for a whole week, provided, that is to say, that the child has been admonished of his fault. For instance, you might say to him: You see now what you have done; you must not expect to get off without punishment. And believe me that such a mode of chastisement is best for the children, and makes far more impression on them, than if they were punished at once for a fault, for while they are waiting they are apt to be far more careful, and more afraid of giving their parents displeasure, since the punishment is still hanging over their heads. I know myself from experience that teachers have tried this plan, and have found it so successful that, after having kept the children in expectation of punishment for a fortnight after the fault was committed, they could afford to let them off altogether, because the latter were in such a state of suspense that they suffered more during that time than if they had actually been punished, and that they would have been quite pleased to have received due chastisement at once, so as to have it over. But many parents say: I cannot punish my child unless I am angry. More is the pity, for that is a sure sign that punishment is inflicted in anger, and not with parental affection. You must overcome yourself, although the tears are forced from you while correcting your child; the punishment will then be all the more efficacious, because it will be in accordance with the command of St. Paul: "Bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord" (Ephes. 6 : 4). Mark the words, "in the correction of the Lord," according to what the prophet says: "When thou art angry, thou wilt remember mercy" (Habacue 3 : 2). Chastisement of this kind convinces children that their

parents really love them, and punish them only for their good.

And to you, Christian children, I must again speak, in conclusion. You must not think that the rod is an instrument of hatred and vengeance; it is rather one of love, and is used to correct your faults or to prevent them, so that your parents may thus lead you to heaven. If the young plants in a garden had sense and reason, they would not complain when the gardener comes with a knife to cut off their superfluous branches. On the contrary, they would say: Cut away everything that is useless and injurious to us, although you have to hurt and wound us thereby; for we wish to be properly trimmed, so that we may adorn the garden and produce better fruit. Such should also be your sentiment, Christian children, when your father or mother takes the rod to punish you. You should think: I have deserved it; it is good and useful for me to be thus corrected and purged of my evil habits. What you cannot or will not understand now, you will see clearly enough later on, and will say with grateful hearts: Oh, what a good father and mother I have had; they did not allow me to do wrong when I was young, and punished all my faults! What better would I be now if my parents had always flattered and caressed me, so that I should hereafter be obliged to do eternal penance for my sins in hell? I must say: Blessed be the hand of my father, of my mother, which, next to God, I have to thank for eternal happiness. Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE GOOD EXAMPLE OF PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN.

"His lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made." —Matth. 18 : 25.

Surely, the poor children could not prevent the father from wasting his master's property, and not pay his debts! Why, then, were they to be sold as slaves, and to atone so severely for the fault of another? Because the master probably thought that the children must be like their parents, and therefore would be just as extravagant with his money. Hence, he sentences them without mercy, and orders the man, and his wife and children, to be sold, that the debt may be paid. Christian parents, what will be the sentence of the heavenly Judge, when you shall one day appear before him to give an account of the property he entrusted to your care—I mean the souls of your children, which he will demand at your hands? Oh, woe to you if by negligence in bringing up your children you have squandered this treasure! Where will you find the means of paying your debt, and making good the loss of those souls? And what will be your fate? You have no other sentence to expect but that which was passed on the servant in to-day's Gospel. You and your children will be condemned to eternal slavery; you, because you were the cause of your children's ruin; they, because they led bad lives, on account of the bad training they got from their parents, and, after the example of the latter, incurred the debt of sin. Therefore, parents, I warn you again, to bring up your children well, and take care of their souls, that they may

go to heaven. The means that you must use to that end are salutary instruction in good, constant watchfulness over all the actions of your children, and parental correction of their faults. We have still one point, and that the principal one, to consider, namely, the necessity of the parents living piously and giving good example to their children.

The best and most necessary means to bring up children in a Christian manner, and to lead them to heaven, is the pious life and good example of their parents.

Christian parents, what is your life, your example, with regard to your children? It is a mirror that they look at daily, since they are always with you, and to it they conform their lives and actions. As a general rule, children who take notice of the lives of their parents act well or ill, acording to the example given them by the ordinary actions of their father and mother. They become what they see. Children will generally be what they see in their parents. If they see in them vanity, pride, avarice, impurity, vindictiveness, laziness, and sloth in the service of God, they shall become what they see. If they see in them Christian humility, modesty, meekness, chastity, the fear and love of God, zeal and piety, they shall become what they see. They will have the same inclinations and desires that they see reflected in those mirrors. "For if the first fruit be holy, so is the lump also; and if the root be holy, so are the branches" (Rom. 11 : 16). As the lump must be like the first fruit, and the branches like the root, so must children be like their parents. Hence, just as bad yeast spoils the bread that is made with it, and as a rotten root infects the branch that grows from it, so it would be an unusual thing if wicked parents had not wicked children. We read that Saul was once amongst the Prophets. "And all that had known him yesterday, and the day before, seeing that he was with the Prophets and prophesied, said to each other: What is this that hath hap-

pened to the son of Cis? And one answered another, saying: And who is his father?" (1 Kings 10 : 11, 12.) As if they meant: We have never heard that his father could prophesy; how, then, can the son have such favor with God that he is amongst the Prophets? The same Saul, when he saw the youthful David fighting in single combat against the gigantic Philistine and conquering him with a sling, could not but express his admiration at such great valor, and asked Abner, the general of the army: "Of what family is this young man descended?" And again: "Inquire thou whose son this young man is." And at last Saul himself asked David: "Young man, of what family art thou?" (Ibid. 17 : 55.) My dear brethren, why was Saul so anxious to know who was David's father? He had often seen him before, and had had him with himself. Because he was fully persuaded that such heroic courage did not come from nature, but from the bravery of the young man's parents. For a close resemblance is, generally speaking, to be found between the conduct of parents and that of their children.

Christian parents, what are your children like, especially when they are still young, and are living under your authority? They are like monkeys that imitate everything they see; like parrots, that repeat whatever they hear; like little birds, that sing whatever tune they are taught. Works speak louder than words. The example of others, and what we see them do, impels us with a gentle violence to imitate them, and that is the case in evil much more than in good things. Now, if it is true that we easily imitate what we see in others, even though they are strangers to us, how much more powerful will not the example of parents be with their own children, since God has given them such great authority and influence over the minds of the latter, that there is nothing like it in the world. Father and mother are visible deities in the eyes of their children, who generally imagine that there can be no one better, or more excellent, than their parents. They think that their father and

mother cannot do wrong, and they look upon their very vices as virtues deserving of praise, so that they imagine the best thing they can do is to imitate something they have seen in their parents. Christ our Lord made use of no other proof to convince the wicked Jews that they were not real children of Abraham than to reproach them for not doing the works of Abraham: "If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham!" (John 8 : 39.) And since they did the works of the devil, he calls them children of the devil: "You are of your father, the devil." Learn from this, Christian parents, what a powerful influence your bad or good example has to corrupt your children, or to lead them on to virtue.

No father, therefore, can be surprised if his sons are given to lying and cheating, to swearing and cursing, to drinking and gambling, if he himself speaks and acts so as to set them an example of these vices. No mother should be astonished if her daughters are too free in their manner, vain and frivolous, when her own conduct is not as it should be. It is to no purpose that parents often exclaim, when their children do or say anything wrong: My goodness, where did the child learn that? Not from me, surely! By all means it is from you. You have taught it, not by express words, but by your bad example. The child has heard or seen it before from his father. How could he help learning it, since it was taught in such an impressive manner, by the living example of his parents, that he picked it up very quickly and retains it in his memory? You will never hear a child speak French if his parents and all the servants of the house speak another language.

Oh, how many children there are nowadays in Catholic families who are far more apt to call upon the demon than upon their Father in heaven! How could it be otherwise? They hear nothing else at home; it is the language that their father and mother speak. Oh, woe to you, parents, who thus accustom yourselves to curse and swear! If it were no sin even on

any other account, it would be a grievous and terrible one by the sole fact that you give your children and servants a very bad example, so that they learn to speak the same horrible language. How many still innocent children know how to speak of impure and unbecoming things, even before they are capable of committing sin, although they will afterwards commit sins enough! How can it be otherwise? they have seen these things and heard them from their imprudent parents. Woe to you again, parents, who in any way whatever give bad example to your children! If it were better for him who gives scandal, even to a stranger, to have a millstone tied about his neck, and to be cast into the depths of the sea, what do a father and mother deserve who give scandal to their own children, and lead them into sin by their bad example? And, what is still more to be deplored, not only does the bad example of parents hurt their own children, but its bad effects are often continued down to their children's children, and to all their posterity, who are thus infected with the contagion of bad example. For as your sons and daughters are, parents, so will their children also be, and these latter will propagate still further the evil influence of the bad example of their own parents; so that there will be an almost endless series of sins descending from one generation to another, like an inheritance.

And it is that of which an angry God complains by the Prophet Osee (6 : 7): "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant," and violated my commands. But why is the sin of parents compared to that of Adam? What covenant did God make with Adam? It consisted in this, that the consequence of Adam's obedience in observing the divine command, or of his disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit, should descend to all his children and their posterity. So that the sin of parents is likened to his in this, that the latter, in virture of the covenant made by God, has descended on all Adam's

posterity, so also the former, by the influence of the parents' bad example, is inherited by their children and by their children's children, who in their turn follow the example of their father and mother.

It is in this sense we must understand the terrible threat of God: "I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Exod. 20 : 5). And how is that? Does the just and merciful God punish innocent children for the sins of their forefathers? Was it their fault if their parents led bad lives? What is the meaning of the words, "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers, to the third and fourth generation"? Because the children are imitators of their parents, and commit sin after the example of their parents. Besides, one of the most terrible punishments that God inflicts upon parents who lead vicious lives is that he generally permits their children and children's children to fall into the same vices. "The children of sinners become children of abominations" (Ecclus. 41 : 8). And again: "But the wicked shall be punished according to their own devices. Their hope is vain, and their labors without fruit, and their works unprofitable; their children wicked, their offspring is cursed" (Wisd. 3 : 10-13).

From all this you may see, Christian parents, how necessary it is, if you wish to do your duty, and to bring up your children in a Christian manner for their last end, that you give them a good, Christian, and holy example. Do you wish them to be pious and to go to heaven? Then the first thing you have to do, your first thought, must be how you yourselves are to lead holy lives, and to advance on the right path to heaven, so as, in all your actions, to give them an example of how they ought to live. The Apostle says: "If the root be holy, so are the branches." We see and experience that in many families, in which, from one generation to another, holy souls are found

who give an example of a good, pious, and conscientious life to their descendants.

Oh, if I could persuade all parents to lead good and Christian lives, and to induce their children to imitate them, what a great change there would be for the better, what a different appearance the whole of Christendom would present in a very short time! The Church, I have no doubt, would be provided with pious priests, the Religious Orders with holy members, spiritual and secular employments with worthy officials, and all households with pious souls; nay, the whole world would become holy, and would be an earthly paradise, in which God alone would be sought, loved, praised, and blessed!

Therefore, you fathers and mothers, continue, or, if you have hitherto been wanting herein, begin, at least, to do your share of the work! Remember that the salvation of so many of your descendants depends on your living piously; hence, before every other domestic care, see that you serve God justly and faithfully, and that you encourage your children to do the same by your example. In that way, when you are no longer on earth, you will leave souls there after you who will (oh, what a consolation for you!) serve God, love him and praise him for you, and their service, love, and praise will be imputed to your training and example. Christian parents, if you give your children an example of virtue in this life, they will follow it, and they will follow you also into eternity, where you will all see, love, and praise your God in the everlasting joys of heaven. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE NECESSITY OF PARENTS GIVING GOOD EXAMPLE TO THEIR CHILDREN.

"*Whose image is this?*"—Matth. 22 : 20.

From the image we may learn the appearance of a person whom it represents. In to-day's Gospel, Christ, in order to show the Jews to whom they should pay tribute, asked them to bring him a piece of money: "Show me the coin of the tribute," and then he asked: "Whose image is this?" "They say to him: Cæsar's." Therefore, answered the Saviour, since the image represents Cæsar, it proves clearly enough to whom the tribute is to be paid. "Give, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." A child is called "the image of his father," so that if I see a son or a daughter, and consider their character, I have nothing more to do in order to know of what kind their father and mother are than to ask: "Whose image is this?" Who is the father of this son? Who is the mother of this daughter? And when I hear their names, although I may not be personally acquainted with them, yet I can form a sufficiently accurate judgment of their manner of life, so as to know whether they are pious or not, according as I have seen whether the children are good or bad. For as a general rule, the character of the parents is reflected in the children, these latter being the images of the former, and generally speaking, imitating their example. Therefore, people say of the pious son or daughter of wicked parents: Oh, that child is not at all like its par-

ents; and the same thing is true of a wicked child whose father and mother are good and pious. Christian parents, you may again conclude from this how important it is for you to give your children a good and holy example. For

Unless parents lead pious lives and give good example, all their efforts to train up children in a Christian manner will come to nothing, or will do very little good.

There are many things required for a field to produce good fruits: The ground must be ploughed, then it must be freed from weeds, thistles, thorns, and stones, and unless this is done a good crop cannot be expected. The seed must also be planted in the ground that is thus prepared to receive it; the seed must be harrowed in, and protected from birds. All these things are necessary, but they are not yet sufficient to insure a good crop; for if the light of the sun and moon are wanting, all the former preparations are of no avail. The sun, with its light and heat, the moon, with its wonderful influence, must assist the decaying seed to shoot forth and grow. If the sun and moon were taken away the whole earth, no matter how much it is ploughed and sown, would be a desert. Furthermore, the condition of the earth depends on that of the sun; if it is cool, so is the earth; if it is cold or hot, so also is the earth.

Now, the fruits that parents who desire to train up their children for their last end expect and wish the latter to bring forth, are piety and good works, by which all who come to the use of reason must gain heaven. Such, too, is the comparison that Jesus Christ himself uses: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire" (Matth. 7 : 19). Now, that fruits of this kind may grow in children, many different means are required, namely, good instruction, constant vigilance, and parental correction. Correction prepares the tender minds of the children, as the plough does the ground, and purifies them from thistles, weeds, and thorns;

that is, it corrects their present evil propensities, and guards against future ones. Good instruction plants the seed: "The seed is the Word of God" (Luke 8 : 11), whereby parents continually instruct and exhort their children to good. By constant vigilance over the actions of children, the birds of prey that seek their souls are prevented from carrying off the good seed, and the children themselves are saved from the dangerous occasions of sin. All these things are good and necessary to a Christian training.

But they help little or nothing to the sanctification of children if the sun and moon do not shed their light, and bring forth fruits of eternal life. Nor do I speak here of the light of God's grace, for, as a matter of course, no good can be produced in us without that. Without God's help no one is capable of doing a good work that is meritorious of heaven; but God is never wanting in his part of the work. Fathers, mothers, you are the sun and moon to your children by the example you give them. Joseph says of his dream: "I saw in a dream, as it were, the sun and moon worshipping me" (Gen. 37 : 39). It is not necessary for us to seek another interpretation of these words besides that which Jacob gives: How, my son, he asks, with evident indignation, what are you thinking of? "Shall I and thy mother worship thee upon the earth?" That vision of Joseph, therefore, shows that the father is the sun, and the mother the moon in the house; and to them in particular does Christ say: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matth. 5 : 16); and they especially who are daily under your training should see that light, in order to be encouraged to do good works. If the sun and moon are eclipsed, the whole earth is in darkness: if the father and mother do not give forth the light of virtue, piety, and the fear of God, the minds of the children are cold and tepid in the divine service. In a word, if the good example of the parents is wanting, all other means

of rearing up their children in a Christian manner will be of little or no use. Let us now consider that more in detail.

1. Although it is true that good instruction does wonders for the salvation of children, and, if it is wanting, they live and die in ignorance of many divine truths, yet, I ask, how could a father or mother hope to instruct others in good, to teach and exhort them to lead Christian lives, if they themselves do not know how to live well and as Christians ought? "No one gives what he has not." Now, suppose that those parents who do not lead a good life spend a long time every day in instructing their children in the truths of salvation. The children see that their father and mother do not practise what they teach; how, then, can their teaching have any effect, since they contradict it by their example? Which of the two are the children most likely to follow? We are far more apt to do what we see others doing than what they command us to do.

Besides, what impression can mere teaching make on children? They could answer their parents: Parents, we see in you few signs of piety, or of the fear and love of God, and on the contrary, a great desire for earthly things, a great neglect of morning and evening prayer, and very little desire to hear the Word of God. And do you think you can teach us to be devout, to attend sermon and catechism on all Sundays and holydays—a thing you never do—to say our morning prayers and make our evening examen of conscience on our knees? How does your teaching correspond with your practice? Children, God forbid that you should ever dare to make such reproaches to your parents! Even from wicked teachers, and much more from your father and mother, although they may not give you good example, you must take their instructions and exhortations to good, for your souls' sake, not otherwise than if they came from the lips of Christ himself. But you, parents, see whether your children have not reason to reproach you, at least in their own minds, when they have sense enough

to see that your conduct is not what it should be. If they cannot see that, what good will your teaching do them?

Jesus Christ, although he is the Holy of holies, and the Supreme Lawgiver, who is bound by no law, did not begin to teach until he had first given a holy example of his doctrine in himself: "And Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1 : 1), is written of him when he commenced his public mission during the last three years of his mortal life. Mark these words: doing goes first, and preaching comes next. Christian parents, if your teaching is to do your children any good, and to help them to save their souls, you must give them good example. Whenever you speak of piety, devotion, virtue, or the service of God, you must not be content with merely saying: Son, daughter, "do this;" but you must say: "Come, let us all do it!" It is not enough to say: Imitate Jesus Christ; you should say, with the Apostle: "Be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11 : 1). Children must be led by the hand. You must act like the mother. That was the way in which St. Monica taught her son Augustine to leave the path of error and to embrace the truth, as the latter tells us: "She watered her words with her tears, and strengthened them by her example." In short, good example alone, without words, can do much with children, but good words, without example, are of no use.

2. Another means necessary to bring up children in a Christian manner consists in the parents being watchful over all their actions. It is true that this vigilance can prevent many sins that the children would in all likelihood commit if they were not watched over; but what good can it do, if the parents had a hundred eyes, and kept them always open, without good example? For how is it that the watchful eye of the parent keeps the child from sin? That comes from a natural inborn shame that prevents us from doing what is wrong or unbecoming in the presence of others, and that shame is very powerful with children, on account of the reverence and respect that God has

inspired them with for their parents. Therefore, there is no child so impudent as to dare to act improperly in presence of its father or mother. But this shame and reverence must of necessity disappear when the children see and know that their parents do wrong. They think, then: Oh, I need not be ashamed to do what my parents do, and to behave as they behave.

3. Besides, vigilance is required of parents, principally, that they may prevent their children from hearing or seeing anything that would scandalize them, from going into the danger of sin, and from being corrupted and made vicious by bad company. There are, alas, so many traitors and deceivers almost everywhere nowadays that one cannot be careful enough, and very often finds danger to the soul where it ought least of all to be feared. But tell me now, you parents who lead bad lives and give your sons and daughters bad example, what use is it for you to prevent your children from hearing or seeing anything scandalous when you yourselves are a stumbling-block in their way every day at home, when they remark in your lives and conduct things that must necessarily be an occasion of scandal to them? What good is it for you to save your children from other dangers of sin outside, when they find dangers enough at home, in the conduct of their own father and mother? Are the dangers that come from their parents less to be dreaded than those that come from strangers, or should they not rather be more feared, since they are much more powerful? No! be as watchful as you like over the actions of your children, but if you do not give them good example your vigilance is useless.

4. The last necessary means of bringing up children well consists in parental correction and chastisement of the children's faults, so that they may be induced to repent, and to avoid such faults in future. Oh, if many fathers and mothers had not such a blind, foolish, and senseless love, or, to speak better, such a hatred and dislike for their children, that they

overlook all the faults of the latter, lest, as they say themselves, they should cause the dear children pain, then most children would not be so ill brought up! But now I ask for the last time: You fathers and mothers who do not give good example, how can you dare to punish in your children a vice that you and they know you are yourselves subject to, so that you are as deserving of punishment as they are? Christian parents, do you not think that your sons and daughters secretly laugh at you when you punish them for a fault that they are well aware you suffer from also? The same reproach might be made to you which Christ addressed to the envious Pharisees: "Hypocrite, cast first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote from thy brother's eye" (Luke 6 : 42). Parents, if you see that your children have done wrong, punish them, but if you wish the punishment to do good you must see that you are not laboring under the same fault; for otherwise your children, or at all events your conscience, would cry out to you: Hypocrite, punish yourself! As water comes from the fountain, so do children come from their parents. If the spring is worthless, the water is no good; so that if children are to be corrected the parents must first correct themselves. You may learn from this, Christian parents, that all your instructions, and vigilance, and correction, and every other means you may use to train up your children in a Christian manner, are of no use unless you live piously and give them good example.

If you give a good example your instructions and warnings will make an impression on your children, your vigilance will keep them from sin, they will require no punishment, or, when you have to inflict it, it will produce the desired effect, and you will thus train up your children properly. Oh, would that all parents acted thus! How much hell would then lose! how many chosen souls would be gained for heaven! How God's honor and glory would be increased!

And you, Christian parents, whatever you do, see, above all, that you fulfil exactly that great and most important duty of rearing up your children well! That is the earnest prayer of the immortal souls of your children, for their going to heaven or to hell for all eternity depends on whether you give them a good training or not. The Angels of heaven make the same request of you, for on you it depends to help them to bring their charges to heaven. Christ, who gave his life amidst unspeakable torments for you, and to whom you cannot, therefore, refuse anything, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, asks you to do it, for thereon depends the saving of the souls he has purchased with his Blood, from the infernal serpent, into whose toils they would fall if you were careless of their training. The heavenly Father himself asks it of you, for he has given you a share of his authority to this end, that you may give him back the souls of your children, which he has confided to your care. Your own souls demand it, for if your children are lost through your negligence you must account for the loss and pay for it.

Therefore, pray daily to the Almighty God for your sons and daughters, that he may govern them by his grace, inspire them with his fear and love, keep them from all sin and all occasions of it, by his holy Angels, lead them on the right way to heaven and keep them on it to the end. Pray to God often with all your hearts rather to take your sons and daughters, no matter how much you love them, out of the world, than to allow them to offend him by a single mortal sin. Never warn, chastise or correct your children without first offering what you are doing to God, with a pure intention, and with the humble prayer that the correction and punishment may be for his greater honor and glory. Pray daily, in the words with which Jesus Christ recommended his Apostles to his heavenly Father: "Father, keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as we also are" (Jno. 17 : 11).

Think often of what you have hitherto heard on this subject.

Let it not be with you, as is the case with most people, who go away from a sermon and forget all they have heard, and are not a bit better for it. Nor must you be like those who now and then remember what they heard in a sermon, but still are drawn back to their old courses by the bad example and way of living of worldly people, so that they think: Oh, preachers only want to frighten us; it is not so bad as they make it out. Other people, who are known to be pious and who wish to go to heaven, bring up their children in a far different manner from what the preacher advises. Do not think that I wish to burden your consciences, and make sins where there are none! You may believe firmly that what I have hitherto said to you is the teaching of the Catholic Church, of the holy Fathers, who have written on the training of children, and even of sound reason itself. But that the manners and customs of men are generally opposed to such teaching is evident from what St. John writes: "The whole world is seated in wickedness" (John 5 : 19). And from what St. James writes: "Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God" (James 4 : 4). And from what Jesus Christ has said: "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matth. 22 : 14). You have heard what we said to you, you have known the truth, but you have not practised it! And against those who do not believe: You have heard the truth, but had no faith in it. The world and its perverse usages made more impression on you than the infallible Word of God. You preferred to follow the example of the children of the world, rather than to walk in the footsteps of the Saints. Not so, Christian parents, must you act: often call to mind the truths you have heard; forget them not, and live according to them. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE DUTY OF FEEDING AND SUPPORTING CHILDREN.

"Lord, my daughter is now dead; but come, lay thy hana upon her, and she shall live.—Matth. 9 : 18.

Would that all fathers and mothers had as great a care and interest in the eternal life of the souls of their children as most parents nowadays have for their children's temporal welfare; if that were the case, many children would be better brought up and would save their souls! There is still another duty that parents owe their children with regard to their temporal welfare, according to which they are bound to support and look after them as well as possible.

I. Parents are bound to support their children, and to take the greatest care of their temporal welfare.

II. Many are not careful enough in this particular, ana sin by neglect and omission.

I. It is useless to ask whether parents are bound to support their children and to look after their temporal welfare. If one were to lose all parental instincts and love for his children, if he were even dead to all human feeling, so that he could have a doubt of this, such a person ought to be sent to learn from the wild beasts what nature itself teaches them. What desert ever contained a wild beast so cruel as to neglect its young, and to allow them to die of hunger? It is wonderful to see how the little birds, when their young at last come out of the shell, fly to and from their nests the whole day long, bringing food to their young in their beaks, although they themselves may be

suffering from hunger, so that during that time they become quite thin. It is wonderful to see how a hen scratches and tears with her beak to feed her chickens. As soon as she finds a grain of corn she does not eat it herself, although she may be hungry enough, but commences to cackle, until her chickens are all about her, when she gives them the precious morsel, and then she begins to scratch and tear afresh. And that care continues on her part until they are able to look after themselves, and leave her.

Man, endowed with reason, is bound to do this, too, not only by the law of nature, but also by the law of charity and justice. The law of charity requires all to help their neighbor who is in extreme necessity when they can, and to save his life, if he cannot help himself. How much more, then, does it not require parents to have that care for their own flesh and blood, whom they have brought into the world? For who would be bound to support children if parents were not? And this is not to be understood merely of little children, and of the parents' obligation to feed and clothe them; but also, according to the same law, the father and mother are bound in conscience to support their children when they are grown up, according to their condition, and to see that they leave them enough to live on decently.

What a great responsibility parents incur by forgetting the obligations of charity and neglecting this duty! Who does not know by experience the misery, sin and vice that are caused by want and poverty? Into what sins, injustice, theft, impurity, and shameful actions could Satan not lead children by his temptations when he knows that they suffer from hunger! Would to God that the world had not such experience of crime committed by children through poverty and want! And, alas! how many sins of which we know nothing come from the same cause, nor shall we know anything of them until the great day of reckoning comes, when they shall be declared to the whole

world! Children, indeed, commit grievous sins and are not to be excused, when they try to procure, by unlawful means, the necessaries of life, that their parents left them without. For, as far as possible, they should endeavor to find some lawful occupation, and trust in divine Providence to supply them with what is needful. But, at the same time, woe to those parents who do not perform their duty by providing for and supporting their sons and daughters as well as they can! All the sins and evils that follow from their neglect are to be attributed to them, and they must answer for them in judgment.

The law of justice binds parents to perform their duty in this respect to their children. Children belong to their parents, under God, and therefore these latter, and no others, are bound to do their best to feed and support them properly. In a word, it is a general rule that he who gives life to a thing is bound to preserve that thing, and to supply it with what is necessary to its natural existence. A tree receives its life from the earth, and from the earth it also gets its nourishment; the fruit has its life from the tree, and must be supported by the same tree until it is ripe. Father and mother have, under God, given life to their children, and therefore they are in justice bound to support those children as well as they can. So that there can be no doubt that parents are obliged to take this care of their children, for the law of nature, the law of charity, the law of justice, and even reason itself prove this.

II. The first great fault committed against this duty will seem strange indeed to you, and it is common enough amongst those who are least to be suspected of it, namely, the rich and wealthy, who can leave their children money enough.

1. That fault is committed by those mothers who, without sufficient cause, or through exaggerated fears, do not nurse their own children, but intrust them to the care of strangers, that they themselves may have less trouble. God himself com-

plains of such people by the Prophet Jeremias: "Even the sea monsters have given suck to their young; the daughter of my people is cruel, like the ostrich in the desert" (Lam. 4 : 3). Of this bird Job says: "She leaveth her eggs on the earth. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers" (Job 39 : 14). Unnatural mothers that you are, unless you are prevented from performing this duty by real illness or weakness, or other reasonable cause! Why has your Creator given you children, if not that you may attend to them? How can children have a natural, proper, and childlike love for you if you neglect them in their tenderest years?

And how many great evils are often the consequence of that which you would try to ignore altogether if you could! For how do you know the character of the people to whom you intrust your children? Do you know their dispositions and inclinations? Whether they are well or ill-reared? Whether they are inclined to sin and vice? If this latter is the case, your poor children will be infected with their wickedness and vice, and be boorish, rude, and uncultivated in their manners, and utterly unlike their parents; for experience shows that children easily copy the manners and dispositions of those who take care of them. Hence, Titus, the son of Vespasian, was always sickly and delicate, because his nurse had a secret malady. Tiberius Nero, who was called Biberius Nero, on account of his drunken habits, was brought up by a nurse who was much given to wine. On account of these and other similar evils, there have been great queens, and princesses, and ladies of the highest rank, and there are some still, who would never allow others to look after their children, no matter how troublesome they themselves might find it to do so. "The daughter of my people is cruel like the ostrich in the desert." Unmerciful as ostriches are those mothers who, through sheer love of their own comfort, neglect the children that God gave them to look after, and intrust them to the care of strangers!

2. Another class who do not support their children properly consists of those parents who, without just cause, do not treat their children alike, as far as the care of their temporal welfare is concerned. Sometimes a son or a daughter takes complete possession of the father's or mother's heart. When that is the case no trouble or expense is spared to dress them nicely, to educate them well, and to give them a position in the world, while the other sons or daughters, because they are not so beautiful, or have some natural defect, cannot get any share in their parents' affection, are treated with indifference, and are allowed to get on as best they may. Unjust father, unjust mother, do you know what you are doing? This favoritism is a torch that will kindle the fire of dissension in your family and your descendants. It will sow the seeds of jealousy, of envy, vindictiveness, lawsuits, and disputes between brothers and sisters. Are they not all your children? Has not the one, as well as the other, been left with you by God as a deposit? Why, therefore, should you care more for one than for the other? Your children have an equal share of your flesh and blood; let them also share equally in your affection. It is frequently the case that, by a just judgment of God, the children who are idolized as favorites of their parents are often the very ones who give least comfort and consolation, and who cause the most grief and sorrow to their parents.

3. The third class consists of those rich but avaricious parents whose only care is to be able to leave a large sum of money to their children at their death, while during their lives they either allow their children to remain idle, or do not make them learn a trade or profession. What a wretched way that is to provide for children! That is not the way to support them according to their condition. What good will your money be to them after your death? They will be ill-mannered, boorish, and ignorant, fit for no important office. No, Christian parents, the best inheritance you can leave your children is some honest

trade, business, or profession, which you must have them taught in their youth, so that afterwards they may be able to provide for themselves, although you cannot leave them anything. This is also meant for those misers who, when their children have chosen a state of life, either refuse them the promised sum of money, or do not help them to get on, although they could easily afford to do so. That is often the reason why children secretly look forward to and long for the death of their old father or mother.

4. The fourth class of those who do not provide for their children as they ought consists of those parents who dress themselves and their children above their means and condition. What a frightful abuse that is in our days, even amongst Christians, who renounce formally the pomps and vanities of the world in holy Baptism, and profess to follow the standard of the humble Jesus on the narrow way of penance and of the cross! What a fearful abuse is that accursed luxury in dress! How many respectable families, who could otherwise live decently according to their state, are thereby brought to poverty, because they wish to put on as good an appearance as others, and do not wish to dress differently from the rest of the world! To such a degree of arrogance have people come that it is enough to excite laughter. Many, when they go out, carry their whole property on their backs, so that when they come home again they have hardly bread and meat enough to eat, and to feed the bodies that they deck out in such a costly manner. When Attila, the king of the Goths, sent one of his officers, dressed up in royal robes, to St. Benedict, the holy man said to the latter, as soon as he saw him: "Put off what you are wearing, my son, for it is not your own." The same might be said nowadays to many children of the world, who strut about in fashionable clothing: Sir, madam, that dress is not your own. Those precious ear rings, that silver or gold lace, that velvet or silk cloak, that damask robe, belong to the mer-

chant, who has entered all your magnificent dresses in his book of debts, and who must, perhaps, wait a long time before he is paid. Put it off; it is not yours. Such is the case with many people in the world.

And what can be the result of this in the long run but poverty? Thus children are often driven to unlawful means and dangerous plans in order to be able to dress as well as before. Oh, if every one profited by the exhortations of St. Paul: "But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content" (1 Tim. 6 : 8). The fashions and customs of the world must be followed, and many think that it is better even to suffer hunger and poverty rather than to appear less than others through Christian modesty and humility! Cruel, heartless parents that you are, who thus foolishly squander what should be employed to bring up and support your children decently!

5. Finally, the most heartless, and, as far as this matter is concerned, the most wicked parents, are those fathers, and those mothers even, who are given to gambling and drinking, and who either shorten or destroy, by their drunken habits, the lives that they are bound to preserve for the good of their children, or make themselves unable to attend to their business, employment, or housekeeping as they ought, or, as is, alas! frequently the case, by constant tippling, spend on Sundays and holydays what they earn during the week, nay, even what their wives and children earn by their labor; and meanwhile the poor mother and her wretched children must remain hungry at home, feeding themselves with bitter tears, and not having any decent clothes to cover themselves with. What an injustice crying to heaven! The very men to whom God has given wives and children to look after, are the ones who rob them of what belongs to them, and bring them to poverty! It is a sin against Christian mercy not to defend and support poor widows and orphans when one can; what a fearful cruelty it must then be to take from one's own family what they have,

and to reduce them to beggary! And to do that by drunkenness, that is to say, by committing sin, and offending God! What sins follow from that! How those children must hate and curse their father! How desperate the mother must become, so that the whole family are likely to exchange temporal for eternal misery! Poor children, how I pity you who have such parents! It were better for you to have been born in the desert, with wild beasts for your father and mother.

Think of this, and ponder on it, Christian parents! Attend, as far as you can, and in the first place, to the eternal salvation of your children, and next to that, see that you provide for their support and temporal welfare with all possible diligence.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE GREAT CARE THAT PARENTS MUST TAKE OF THEIR CHILDREN, AS FAR AS TEMPORAL THINGS ARE CONCERNED.

"*Blessed is the womb that bore thee!*"—Luke 11 : 27.

Happy are you parents who will one day be able to say with truth: I have reared, nursed, fed, and supported my children, and taught them during their lives to love Jesus Christ, to be his friends and imitators, his brothers and sisters, so that they may now rejoice forever with their Father in heaven! But, woe! if the contrary is the case, if your son or daughter must cry out from the flames of hell: "Accursed be the womb that bore me!" Cursed be the father who gave me life, the mother who suckled me! Or if it must be said of you: Cursed be the father, or mother, who gave life to, or brought forth,

that son, that daughter! Their miserable children are in hell for all eternity, because their parents did not bring them up for heaven, and because they did not support them and look after their temporal interests, as they could and should have done. That such a terrible misfortune may be averted from every one, all faults regarding this important duty should be carefully amended. In my last sermon I proved that parents sin by not caring enough for the support and temporal interest of their children; now I am about to speak to those parents who care too much for their children's temporal welfare, and thus sin by excess.

I. Some parents care too much for their children, and for their sake make an unlawful use of otherwise lawful means.

II. Others use unjust means.

I. Is it possible to be too careful of the temporal prosperity of children, especially when lawful means are used to secure it? Yes; even the care you must have of your children's temporal welfare, if it is to profit them anything, should be regulated by prudence and discretion. Now, there are fathers and mothers of families who depend altogether on their own industry and labor for their happiness and prosperity. They are so taken up with their domestic cares, with their trade, or business, or employment, that they hardly think of God once in the day; they have no time for piety or devotion; they hardly hear a sermon once in the year; they are satisfied with going to confession and Communion once or twice a year, and they are always uneasy, anxious, and disturbed; their thoughts and ideas are constantly turning on making money, and in order to attain that end with greater certainty, they seldom give alms to the poor and needy, although they thus act in a very unchristian and unlawful manner, or else they give alms very sparingly and not according to their means, solely through fear that they or their children may suffer loss. It is of such people

that I speak; and I say, without any fear of being mistaken, or of being guilty of a rash judgment, that they do too much altogether. Their care for their children's temporal welfare is excessive, and therefore I call it foolish and culpable.

They forget themselves in their eagerness to labor for others. They bake the bread to feed others, while they themselves suffer hunger. They are like the oxen that plough the land, but can never reap a crop off it, nor have any advantage from their labor but the straw that is thrown to them for food. They forget their own lives, that their children may have the means of living a few, uncertain years here below, and they keep only the useless straw for their immortal souls, which they allow to remain poor and naked, like a beggar's child, for after death they will have nothing left to live on for eternity. What folly that is! Charity begins at home, especially in what concerns the soul. Do you, then, care so little for your souls, fathers and mothers, that through love of your sons or daughters you neglect your own spiritual welfare, and are prepared to go bare and empty of good works into the house of your eternity? Remember that the judgment of God awaits you after death, and then the question will be: What do you bring for your soul? Where are the good works for which you can expect a reward? Your only care is to leave your children some money, that they may enjoy themselves after you die, so that you leave your poor souls in poverty and nakedness. Give, first of all, to God what belongs to him, and to your souls what belongs to them, and then you are free to look after the spiritual and temporal welfare of your children.

Do you think you can have a blessing on your household when you neglect and refuse to serve him who alone can bestow a blessing on your labor and trouble? If God is not on your side, what will all your care, and anxiety, and labor, and trouble profit you? "Except the Lord build the house," that is, helps you to support your family, all that you do for that pur-

pose is labor in vain. You do not act sensibly, therefore, nor prudently, for the welfare and advantage of your children, when you labor and work in forgetfulness of the Almighty and his service. A little of the favor and friendship of God would do more for your and your children's temporal prosperity than half the riches of earth without his favor and grace. The more children you have, the more, if you are wise, you will try to make God friendly to you and yours by good works, so as to benefit by his infinite power and generosity.

Therefore give to God what belongs to God, and to your souls what belongs to them. This should be your first care. Everything else you may leave to the common Father of all, the Ruler of the world, whose most bounteous Providence will certainly know how to bless your moderate labor and care, and to supply the wants of your children, as he himself says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke 12 : 31). Never let a month pass by without uniting yourselves to God by a worthy confession and Communion. When the conscience is at peace and the will is always united with God, your labor is most likely to turn out well. Make a point of hearing a sermon every Sunday, as long as you are in good health. It is only right that, after laboring the whole week for your mortal bodies, you should do something once a week at least, on days specially consecrated to God, for the support of your immortal souls, by giving them their supernatural food and encouraging them afresh in the divine service. In your daily domestic duties, do not forget the good intention; keep yourselves in the presence of God by frequent ejaculations, and you will certainly have the Almighty as your helper in everything you do.

II. I speak to you now, misers without conscience, to whom it is a matter of indifference whether you make your profits justly or unjustly, as long as you can make them at all.

"Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man" (Eccl. 10 : 9), who has gone so far as to set his heart on money and riches, for there is no law, human, divine, or natural, that he is not ready to violate in order to hoard up wealth. He does not pay his workmen; he keeps shopkeepers and tradesmen a long time waiting for their money; he falsifies his accounts, so as to escape paying his just debts; he gives bribes to lawyers, that his opponent in a lawsuit, although his case is just, may lose it. Merchants of this kind sell bad wares as if they were good; tradesmen keep the material belonging to others, that is left after having finished their work; shopkeepers change weights and measures; public officials allow themselves to be bribed against the interests of justice; the rich lend money to the poor in time of want, at usurious interest; the powerful abuse their influence to rob widows and orphans, under a pretence of legality; servants steal from their masters; others receive stolen goods, paying for them very cheaply, or keep what they find without making any inquiries for the owner, cheating their neighbors in different ways for a paltry profit or a worthless gain.

The Lord says, by the prophet: "They shall build up, and I will throw down" (Malach. 1 : 4). They will gather together, and when they think they have something I will scatter their possessions to the winds. God will either take away from you, by a premature death, those children for whom you now sacrifice your conscience and your eternal salvation, so that your ill-gotten wealth will fall into the hands of strangers, or else the saying, "Ill got, ill gone," will be verified in your case. Avaricious parents generally have spendthrift children, who very soon make away with what has been unjustly acquired; or else an angry God, who has borne your wickedness so patiently, will know how to punish you for it by all kinds of calamities, so that your children and your children's children will be brought to bitter poverty.

And that is what God threatens: "This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the earth, for every thief shall be judged.... I will bring it forth, and it shall come to the house of the thief, and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof" (Zach. 5 : 3). The inheritance of the children of sinners shall perish," so that no one will know what has become of them, and with their posterity shall be a perpetual reproach" (Eccl. 4 : 9). The children of the wicked "shall be oppressed with want" (Job 20 : 10). They will have to beg their bread some day or other at the doors of those whom their parents wronged. "The riches which he hath swallowed, he shall vomit up, and God shall draw them out of his belly; and when he hath the things he coveted, he shall not be able to possess them. There was nothing left of his meat," which he should have shared with the poor, "and therefore nothing shall continue of his goods" (Job 15 : 21). Achan wished to enrich his family by unjust means, when he kept for himself the gold he found in Jericho, and therefore he and his whole family were destroyed by fire. Giezi attempted to gain money unjustly, when, against the command of his master Eliseus, he received presents from Naaman, and therefore he and all his descendants were smitten with leprosy (4 Kings 5). King Saul tried to become rich by saving the most valuable possessions of the Amalecites from destruction, and keeping them for himself, against the command of God, and therefore his children were not allowed to succeed him on the throne (1 Kings 15). Achab had seventy sons whom he wished to enrich, and in reality he made them exceedingly wealthy, but because he defrauded Naboth of his vineyard he brought fearful calamities on himself and his sons (4 Kings 5). He himself died a violent death, and the Sacred Scripture says of his sons: "Jehu slew all that were left of the house of Achab, till

there were no remains left of him" (4 Kings 10 : 1). Woe, then, I cry out with the Prophet Jeremias (22 : 13): "Woe to him that buildeth up his house by injustice." Foolish parents, that is the way in which you build when you use unlawful means to secure your children's prosperity! You can leave them no other inheritance but a malediction from God!

And even if, as rarely happens, God sometimes, in his inscrutable designs, allows your wickedness to prosper, so that you can make your children rich and give them a good position in the world, then your desire is quite fulfilled, is it not? Most unfortunate people that you are! your whole thought is how others may live comfortably for a time when you die, and you never think of the unhappy death that awaits yourselves! Do you, then, give yourselves up to the devil, along with your children, for a handful of money? Your children, I say, for they will either restore what you have gained unjustly, or they will not. If they do their duty, to what purpose have you saved money for them? To no purpose, unless to give them the trouble of restitution, and to reduce them to poverty, while you are suffering the torments of hell! If they do not make restitution when they learn the injustices you committed, oh, woe to them, then, for they will certainly be lost for all eternity! Could you treat your children more cruelly than that? And suppose that, by the mercy of God, they save their souls; you are still lost forever. What greater folly could there be than to ruin one's self for the sake of others, and to walk deliberately into hell that they may live a few years in comfort and pleasure?

And yet there are parents who have reached such a degree of folly and madness that they never trouble themselves about the hereafter. Christian parents, it is the God of truth himself who assures you that if you leave unjustly acquired wealth to your children, you are lost forever; and if you try to enrich them by unlawful means you incur the sentence of eternal damnation, the eternal death of the soul!

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AUTHOR

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